

ROUTLEDGE REVIVALS

# **Mao and the Workers**

**The Hunan Labor Movement,  
1920-1923**

**Lynda Shaffer**



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*For my mother  
and in memory of my father*



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**“And ye shall know the truth  
and the truth shall make you free.”**

***The Gospel of John***  
**Chapter VIII, Verse 32**





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I was also most fortunate that the many social studies and history teachers that I encountered in secondary schools encouraged both this fascination for world history and my inordinately skeptical nature, which was fueled by the conflicting stories of American history that I received in Kansas, Illinois, Alabama, Texas, and overseas, in segregated schools and in integrated ones. I suppose I have been trying to get our story straight ever since, on a global level as well as a local one. My contact with these teachers occurred so long ago that I doubt if they even remember me, but I remember them and what they said and what I discovered in their classrooms. In particular, I would like to thank my social studies teachers in Tyler, Texas, where I spent my senior year: Ann Clapp, Frances Purinton, and Bob Wyche. Mrs. Purinton was my first and only world history teacher, and Mr. Wyche introduced us to the history of China and Africa in his World Political Geography course.

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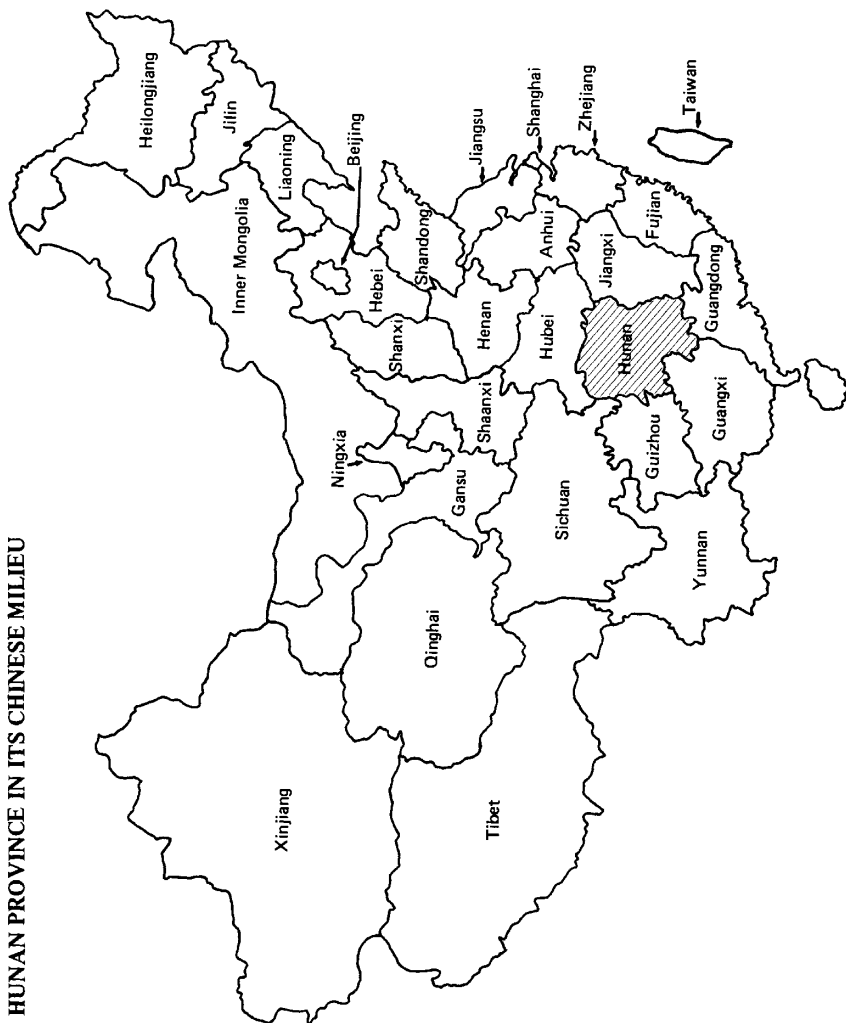
West who have helped me place the Chinese labor movement in a larger context, particularly James Allen and David Montgomery. My only regret in this regard is that I did not have the time — the years that it would have required — to develop the comparative approach to this topic that their comments and bibliographic suggestions would have allowed.

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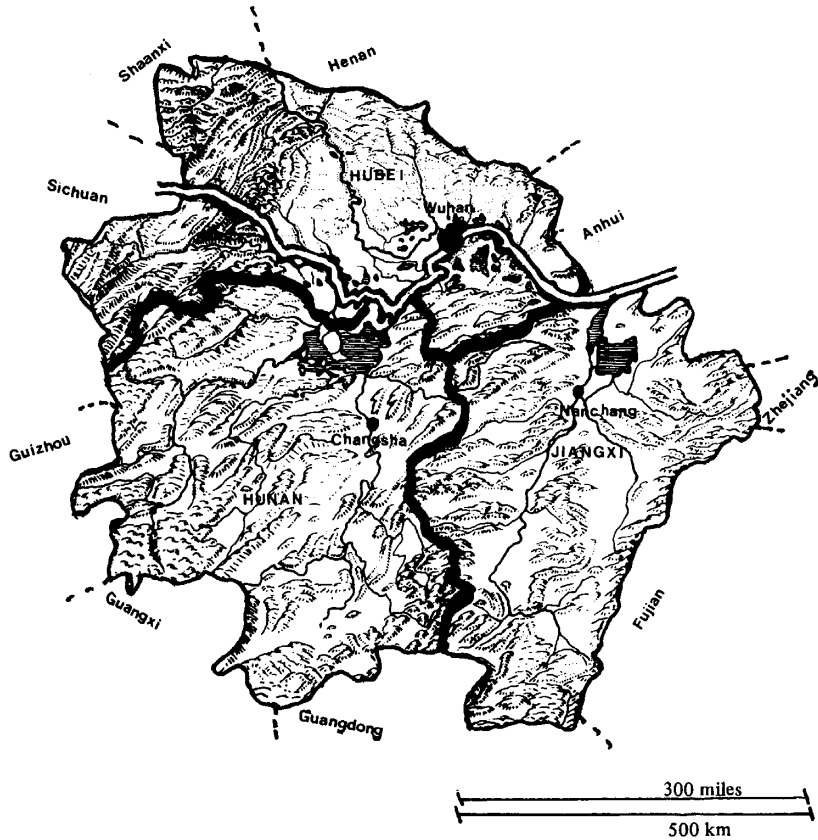
Lynda Shaffer  
Medford, Massachusetts  
March 1982

## HUNAN PROVINCE IN ITS CHINESE MILIEU





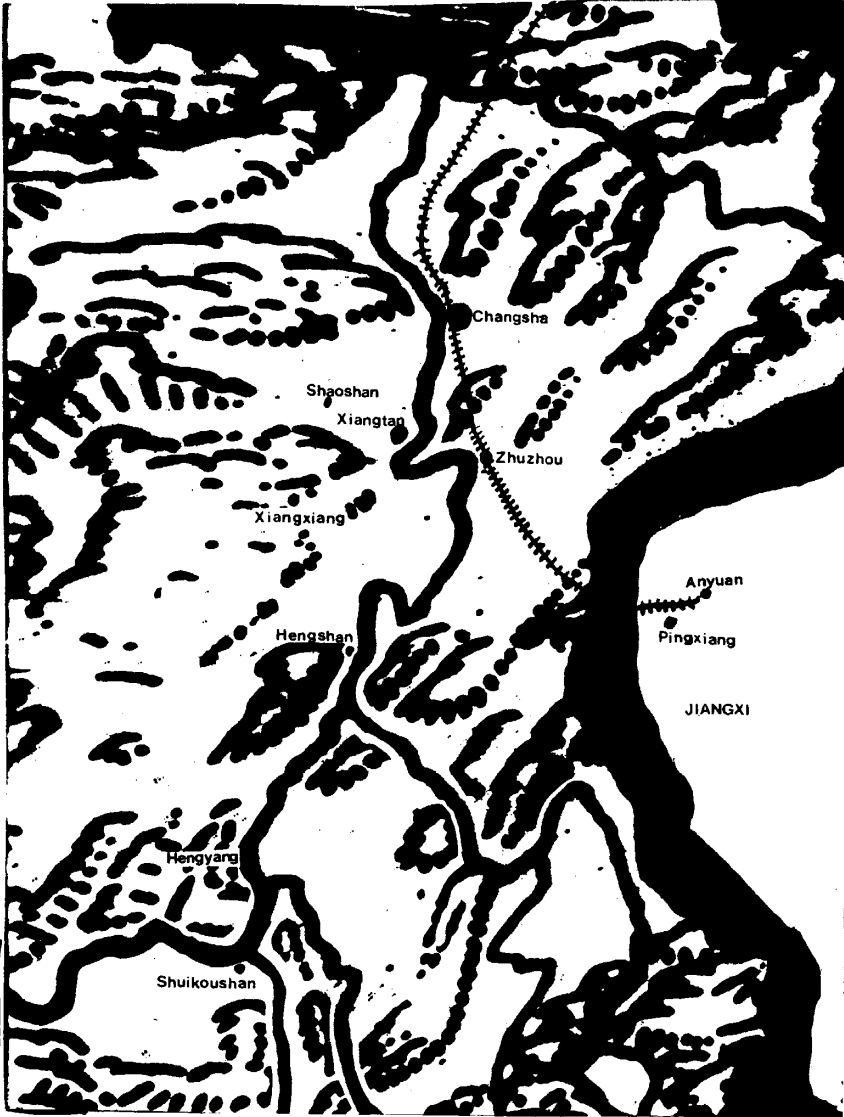
## CENTRAL CHANGJIANG (YANGTZE) BASIN



On this map the size of the Changjiang (the Long River) as it flows through Hubei and loops down to form small pieces of the northern borders of Hunan and Jiangxi has been exaggerated in order to distinguish this major east-west trunk line from its many tributaries.

The metropolitan area of Wuhan, one of the largest industrial centers in China, is composed of three cities: Wuchang, the provincial capital of Hubei, on the southern bank of the Changjiang; and Hanyang and Hankou which are on the northern bank, where they are separated by the Han River as it flows into the Changjiang.

XIANG RIVER VALLEY, SELECTED SITES





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# Mao and the workers



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## Introduction

Mao Zedong, a man whose name has become inseparably linked with peasant revolution, actually began his career as a Communist in an apparently orthodox way, as an organizer of urban labor. From late 1920 until the spring of 1923, for about two and one-half years, he led a remarkably successful effort to unionize the workers of Hunan, his home province. In July 1921 he became the head of the Hunan branch of the Communist-led Labor Secretariat, and by November 1922 he was the secretary-general of the newly created Hunan Federation of Labor Organizations. He abandoned these offices and the arena of urban labor in April 1923, only after Zhao Hengti, warlord and governor of Hunan, forced him to leave the province.

Historians generally have neglected Mao's career as a labor organizer, and to a lesser extent, the labor movement itself, perhaps because it was a peasant-based revolution that he led to power in 1949. Certainly it is true that the concentration of scholarly efforts on the revolution in the countryside has contributed a great deal to our understanding of the Communist success. And Mao's career as an organizer of the urban workers was a relatively short one. On the other hand, there is no reason to assume that the years Mao spent with the urban proletariat were of no consequence, that the events of these early and formative years had no significant impact on his ideas about Marxism and the Chinese revolution.

The prevailing wisdom regarding Mao's ideas during these years is that nationalism, not a class-conscious Marxism, was the fundamental inspiration behind his revolutionary urge, both before and after his experience with the unions. Stuart Schram, one of the most respected biographers of Mao, has suggested that he was so indifferent to the Marxist notion of class that he was willing to hand over the leadership of the nationalist stage of the revolution

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to the merchants in 1923, only months after he had left Hunan and its labor movement (Schram, 1966: 73-74). While this study hopes to put that notion to rest, it is true that after leaving Hunan Mao never again devoted his energies to the labor movement, even though he went from Hunan to Shanghai, the largest concentration of workers inside the Great Wall. But, one cannot know what sort of Marxist or labor leader he was or understand why he subsequently became an organizer for the Nationalist-Communist alliance or why he eventually turned to peasant organizing in 1925 without making a serious examination of the labor movement that he left behind.

Not only has Mao's involvement in the movement been overlooked, but the labor movement itself, this apparently orthodox beginning of the Chinese Communist revolution, has been neglected. In the 1920s and 1930s a few reformers and revolutionaries attempted to explain the rapid and explosive take-off of the modern workers' movement, but until recently only one Western academic had turned his attention to the question of the role of the proletariat in this revolution: Jean Chesneaux, who published Le Mouvement Ouvrier Chinois de 1919 à 1927 in 1962.<sup>1</sup>

In this seminal work Chesneaux described China's workers and the significant political role that their unions played in the series of events that brought Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalist Party to power in 1927. Labor unrest surfaced in 1918 and 1919 and surged in January 1922 with the declaration of the Nationalist-led Hong Kong seamen's strike. The seamen touched off a national strike wave that lasted about thirteen months and was characterized mainly by economic demands and an insistence on the right to unionize. This strike wave surprised and alarmed the more comfortable residents of China. In February 1923 one British editor lamented, "Chinese labor, that hitherto docile beast, is learning striking and sabotage" (China Advertiser clipping, in U.S. Government: RG 84, Vol. 32). And one American consul concluded:

Unmistakable evidences of Bolshevik handicraft are everywhere apparent, and instead of the workers themselves taking the lead, we find that the various strikes have been engineered by young students having no particular experience in the industry in which the strike is called (Huston, 1923: p. A).

This strike wave dissipated only after the warlord Wu Peifu crushed the northern railroad unions in February 1923. After a

two-year pause, the May Thirtieth Movement of 1925, an anti-imperialist, highly nationalistic movement, set off another strike wave which continued through the Northern Expedition of 1926-27, a military campaign which sought to defeat the regional warlords and unify the country. This second, more explicitly political upsurge culminated in the workers' seizure of Shanghai in March 1927, after which they threw open the city gates and cheered the entry of Chiang Kai-shek and the armies of the Northern Expedition. Indeed, Chesneaux suggested that it was the extensive and intensely fought political struggle waged by the workers that made possible the success of the Expedition and the Nationalist Party's rise to power. And it was Chiang's subsequent destruction of the Communist unions in April 1927 that ended the open and radical phase of China's modern labor movement.

The most obvious questions regarding this movement are how the workers in a country that was so overwhelmingly peasant could play such a significant role in Chinese politics, and why they would follow the lead of Communist revolutionaries. Chesneaux estimated that there were in China in 1919 about one and a half million modern workers (Chesneaux, 1968: 42). Since China's total population at that time was thought to be approaching 500 million, these workers, as defined by Chesneaux, constituted less than three-tenths of one percent of the population. He believed that the reason so few could accomplish so much was that these modern workers were concentrated in large enough numbers in certain strategic places. There were pockets of modern workers already laboring under conditions that Marx believed to be alienating and conducive to revolution. Even though these pockets were not characteristic of the country as a whole, they were able to provide the energy for the movement (Chesneaux, 1968: 47).

Chesneaux's observation that the modern workers were concentrated in strategic places is, no doubt, true. The difficulty with his analysis lies in his assumption that the only potentially revolutionary workers were those already working under what appeared to be the most modern conditions and in its corollary that the energy behind the movement had to have come from these workers. This assumption, given the high level of labor activity which had to be explained, led Chesneaux to define the concept of modern worker in the broadest possible fashion, in fact, so broadly that the definition loses significance. On the other hand, his definition was not so broad as to include all those who were active in the



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workers' movement, since he did omit from consideration those who remained enmeshed in some forms of preindustrial labor organizations. Thus his definition minimizes the number of potentially revolutionary workers and obscures some of the most important factors that produced this movement.

Since China had few large-scale, highly mechanized factories, Chesneaux fell back on one single criterion to delineate the modern working class, to decide which workers were modern and which were not. Otherwise, even his pockets of proletariat would have shrunk to miniscule proportions. What mattered, he suggested, was simply the workers' relationship to the means of production, to the product, and to the employer. Workers qualified as members of the working class if they "no longer owned the instruments of production or the products of their labor," and if they "were in complete subjection to their employers" (Chesneaux, 1968: 24).

Exactly what "complete subjection to the employer" means is not spelled out, but one assumes that he was referring to the absence of paternalistic relationships and the system of obligations that characterized labor-management relations in preindustrial enterprises. Or, to quote Marx, he was referring to those "feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations" which the bourgeoisie "has pitilessly torn asunder," the "motley feudal ties that bound man to his natural superiors." Under industrial capitalism, there is "no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, then callous cash-payment" (Marx and Engels, 1951: 35).

Using this definition, the most politically significant group of urban workers that Chesneaux chose to exclude were those who pursued the "petty urban trades" and the craftsmen. Even though they were active participants in the same movement as the modern workers,

... they were involved in a system of production or of services that belonged to the past, they tended to look toward the past, and were not really part of the new forces in Chinese society. They were allies of the labor movement rather than an integral part of it (Chesneaux, 1968: 25).

Essentially, they were excluded because they were guild members, and guilds belonged to the past. Chesneaux assumed that guild members still were enmeshed in preindustrial relationships that did not enmesh other workers, or were of a significantly different

sort than the preindustrial relationships that did characterize the employer-employee relationship of many other workers. They were not modern; therefore the conditions of their employment precluded them from becoming an integral part of the labor movement.

Chesneaux also obscured the significant role of traditional workers enmeshed in preindustrial labor organizations by including two large and significant groups of such workers in his modern working class, where they do not belong according to his own definition. These were the miners and such transport workers as porters and ricksha pullers. True, they were not guild members, for guilds were generally limited to skilled craftsmen, but they did belong to contract labor gangs or regional associations, both of which were characterized by obligations and expectations that were no more, or no less, modern than those of the guilds. Chesneaux chose to include the miners and transport workers, for "no history of the Chinese labor movement would be complete" without them (Chesneaux, 1968: 24), but empirically, the same would seem to apply to guild members. The theoretical lines that Chesneaux draws are difficult to maintain, and the inclusion of one group and exclusion of another seems quite arbitrary when one looks closely at the personal relationships between employer and employee. Furthermore, as Chesneaux admitted, there does not seem to have been any significant difference in the role they played in the movement (Chesneaux, 1968: 24-25).

The problematic nature of Chesneaux's explanation for a significant Communist-led labor movement becomes most apparent when one looks closely at the movement in Hunan, with which Mao was involved. By March 1923, over 28,000 workers belonged to the nineteen unions that made up the Communist-led Hunan Federation of Labor Organizations ("Shengxian xia zhi Hunan," 1923: 74-77). In just four months, from September to December 1922, at least nine of these nineteen unions had gone out on strike not only for higher wages, but also for the right to unionize.<sup>2</sup> And yet if one examines these unions in terms of their qualifications for an orthodox Marxist labor movement, they fail. They were not the stuff of orthodox revolution. At least 13,500, or 48 percent, of them were miners who belonged to preindustrial contract labor gangs. The second largest group were the 8,100 craftsmen, about 30 percent of the total, most of whom had been guild members before they unionized. These 2,000 construction workers, 1,500 tailors, 300 lithographers, 500 barbers,

300 writing brush makers, 200 cobblers, 300 teashop employees, and 3,000 potters should not, according to Chesneaux, receive consideration. He would, however, have included the 200 ore-boat workers and the 1,850 ricksha pullers since they were part of the transportation sector. On the other hand, there were some modern workers: 1,250 railroad employees, 350 lead-type printers, 1,500 mint employees, 100 workers at the electric generating plant, 300 at the lead-smelting plant, and 1,500 spinners ("Shengxian xia zhi Hunan," 1923: 74-77).<sup>3</sup> But if one were to apply strictly even the one criterion of the worker's relationship to his employer, 85 percent of the membership in Communist-led unions in Hunan would have to be excluded from consideration. This obviously is absurd. There simply is no justification for demoting them to the category of "allies" (Chesneaux, 1968: 25); in Hunan, at least, traditional workers were the core of the Communist-led movement. And, since the core of the Hunanese movement was still enmeshed in traditional structures, it follows that most of the energy behind the labor movement could not have come from the sorts of contradictions between employers and employees that Marx suggested might bring about a proletarian revolution in an advanced industrial country. This is not to say, however, that there is no Marxist explanation for the movement, only that the explanation is not orthodox. By focusing attention on the traditional workers, it may be possible to provide a more convincing explanation of why this movement ignited so quickly and spread so rapidly.

An analysis of these strikes also allows one, in a limited way, to make some tentative suggestions about why the workers' movement suffered such a severe setback in 1927, and why it was that, in the end, China's peasants became the main force of the revolution. There has been a tendency in the literature in recent years not only to downplay the importance of the mass movements in the Northern Expedition,<sup>4</sup> but also to blame the defeat of the labor movement in 1927 on internal weaknesses. What is implied in this literature is that the labor movement might have survived had the unions been better organized and relied less on bourgeois allies. One historian of Hunanese politics has even suggested that the labor movement in Hunan in the 1920s was a creature of elite politics: that it succeeded when there was elite support for it and failed when that support was withdrawn (McDonald, 1978: 5, 195, 200, 206, 258). Hopefully, an analysis of these Hunanese unions will dispel such notions and suggest an alternative ex-

planation for the disaster of 1927.

Chapters 1 and 2 of this study are designed to provide the background necessary for an analysis of the Communist-led labor movement in Hunan. In order to understand the peculiarities of this province, one must examine its recent history and particularly the political role of its intellectual elite and Mao's own development in contact with that elite. Furthermore, the Communist movement in Hunan drew on several other movements, at least in the beginning, and thus a discussion of the mass education movement and the anarchist-led labor movement provide a necessary backdrop for the Communist movement.

Chapters 3 through 6 analyze four out of the nine strikes which characterized the unionization process that occurred in Hunan in 1922 and 1923. The most compelling reason for choosing the strikes of the Anyuan Railroad Workers and Miners' Club, the Construction Workers' Union, the Lead-type Compositors and Printers' Union, and the Shuikoushan Lead and Zinc Miners' Club is simply that there is more information about them.<sup>5</sup> These were all important strikes, particularly the one among the workers at Anyuan and the one among the construction workers in Changsha. These two were the first highly successful strikes involving large numbers of workers in the Hunan area, and thus they had a considerable demonstration effect. The printers' strike, while it involved only a small number of workers, was important in terms of the relative literacy of the workers and the leadership role they played in the Hunan Federation of Labor Organizations. The Shuikoushan strike also involved several thousand workers and is interesting because it spawned a peasant union in 1923, the first in Hunan. With the exception of the Anyuan strike, which actually took place in Jiangxi Province, all of these strikes were singled out by the American like consul in charge in Changsha as "of a serious nature" (Meinhardt, 1923a: 8504).

These four strikes were also the most successful of the nine in Hunan during this period ("Shengxian xia zhi Hunan," 1923: 76-77),<sup>6</sup> which is probably the major reason that there is more information about them. By using these four, the early success of the movement, undoubtedly, will be somewhat overdrawn. Ideally, a study of a less successful strike, such as the tailors' strike, would be extremely useful in determining the variables of success or failure, but there is relatively little information about it.<sup>7</sup> Although it is certainly not ideal, it is possible to mark out the key factors that contributed to

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the success of the movement by studying the most successful strikes. From an examination of these four — one in a government-owned mine, one in a privately owned mine, one among the members of a craft guild, and one from the newly modernized sector — a picture can be drawn of the conditions and the actors that produced the Hunan labor movement and Mao Zedong's role in it.

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> This work has been translated into English by H. M. Wright. See Jean Chesneaux (1968). All citations of this work in this study are from the English-language edition

<sup>2</sup> Combining the lists of strikes provided in "Shengxian xia zhi Hunan," and that provided by the American Vice Consul in charge in Changsha, Carl D. Meinhardt (in U.S. Government, Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State [RG 84] C-8, Changsha, 1923, Doc. No. 850.4), there were a total of nine major strikes. Meinhardt actually lists twelve since he counts the Zhu-Ping Railroad strike and the Xiang Dong coal miners' strike separately from the Anyuan strike. The Xiang Dong coal mine, he clearly indicated, was a part of the Anyuan strike, as was the Zhu-Ping Railroad strike. (He also lists a strike by Yuan River carrying-coolies, that Chinese sources do not mention.) These lists are completely consistent with the information given by Li Rui, the author of an unofficial biography of the early Mao. See Li Rui (1957), pp. 160-238. This work has been translated into English as The Early Revolutionary Activities of Comrade Mao Tse-tung (White Plains, New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1977), edited by James C. Hsiung with a long analytical introduction by Stuart R. Schram.

<sup>3</sup> The difficulty with describing union membership by sector is that the sources lump together both the railroad workers and miners at Anyuan. For the purposes of this analysis the author has divided them into 10,500 miners and 450 railroad workers. This problem will be discussed further in the chapter on the Anyuan strike.

<sup>4</sup> For example, see Donald A. Jordan (1976).

<sup>5</sup> There is a considerable amount of information about the Yue-Han railroad workers' strike, but I have omitted it from consideration here because the Hunanese railroad unions were integrally related to those in north China, and they would more logically be considered in a study of railroad unions than in a study of the movement in Hunan.

<sup>6</sup> In "Shengxian xia zhi Hunan," the author (unknown) describes each of these four strikes as a "complete victory." The railroad workers' strike and the barbers' strike are both described as "for the most part successful." The strikes of the weavers and writing-implement makers are both described as "half victories," and the tailors' strike was declared a "small victory." Meinhardt (Records of Foreign Service Posts, Changsha 1923, Doc. No. 850.4) describes all the strikes as successful, including the tailors' strike, although he singles out the Shuikoushan strike as "entirely successful." The author of "Shengxian xia zhi Hunan," who published his article in a Communist publication, thus appears to be more critical, or more pessimistic, than the American

vice consul with regard to the success or failure of strikes.

<sup>7</sup> Other strikes omitted from this study include those of the weavers, barbers, and writing-implement makers.

## The Setting: Hunan, Its Elite, and Mao

Hunan has produced more than its share of revolutionaries in the twentieth century. Hunanese were prominent in the Revolution of 1911 and they have played an even larger role in the Chinese Communist Party. Not only was Mao a Hunanese, but so were Li Lisan, who led the Party from 1928 until 1930, and Liu Shaoqi, chairman of the Chinese People's Government from 1958 until the Cultural Revolution which began in 1966. The "crucial upper middle level" of the Party, defined as the 170-member Central Committee, was over one-quarter Hunanese in 1956, whereas the population of Hunan constituted only 7.5 percent of the total Chinese population (Waller, 1972: 57-59). There were three times as many Hunanese on the committee as one would expect considering the size of the province's population. Why this province, with its red dirt and red-peppered cuisine, would produce so many red revolutionaries is a question that has intrigued a number of historians, and the emerging answer is not simple. It is related to the rather special role that Hunanese played in Chinese politics in the nineteenth century, the strength of the province's traditional intellectual elite, and the fact that that elite managed to postpone any significant Western penetration of the province until quite late, so that when the Treaty Powers finally did manage to open the province, their arrival was much more dramatic and the reaction to it profound, intellectually and politically. This intellectual ferment combined with the collapse of an effective republican administration, both nationally and locally, and the unusual amount of warlord devastation in the province created a mood of crisis. Many responded to the challenge of saving the nation, and Mao was one of them.

*THE PROVINCE AND  
ITS POLITICS TO 1911*

Hunan is one of China's most beautiful and wealthiest provinces. Though situated in the interior in a south-central position, its major river valleys were never isolated. The Chang Jiang (Yangtze River), an important east-west transport route, delineates a portion of Hunan's northern boundary. On its southern border, passes through the Nanling Mountains lead to Guangxi and the coastal province of Guangdong. Thus Hunan's Xiang River Valley was a major north-south route. Described as "three-tenths hill, six-tenths water, and one-tenth plain" (Stauffer, 1922: 90), its evergreen-covered mountains in the east, west, and south slope down and north to the paddy-covered plains around Dongting Lake, the second largest fresh water lake in China and a natural retention basin for the Chang Jiang. Hunan lies in the southern range of the temperate zone. Its summers are hot and humid, and winter brings a few light snowfalls.

The irrigated plains around Dongting Lake and the lower reaches of the river valleys constitute one of China's most important rice producing areas (Tregear, 1965: 243). An old Chinese proverb perhaps overstated the case by proclaiming that "when the Hunan plain is fruitful, the realm is supplied," but it is true that the province was one of only three that consistently produced a rice surplus. Up to one-fifth of the usual annual production of somewhat less than 50 million piculs found its way down the Chang Jiang to the heavily populated coastal cities (CEB, 1923: No. 138, 4-5).

Yet less than one-third of the cultivated acreage in Hunan was devoted to rice. Hemp, ramie, wheat, fruit, tea, cotton, sesame, tung-oil beans, sweet potatoes, peanuts, tobacco, mulberry bushes, and fodder beans filled the terraced fields. Many of these crops, too, were exported. Hunan's fodder beans even fed the cattle of Great Britain and Italy (Dingle, 1917: 44, and Stauffer, 1922: 90), and Hunanese fir, pine, cypress, oak, cedar, and bamboo supplied the Hankou timber market (CEM, 1925: No. 11, p. 18; Jen Yu-ti, 1964: 137).

The mineral wealth of the mountains matches the productivity of the valleys and plains. Hunan possesses the world's richest deposits of antimony. During the 1920s up to 90 percent of the world's production passed through the provincial capital, Changsha, on its way to Europe and America (Torgasheff, 1927: 158). Other



mineral deposits include lead, zinc, silver, gold, tin, arsenic, mercury, sulphur, manganese, graphite, alum, and copper (Wheeler, 1915: 134-138).

Transportation in Hunan was traditionally confined to the fine river network, or "narrow footpaths paved with a single line of heavy stone slab." In 1906 a railroad was built to link Zhuzhou on the Xiang River with a coal mine just across the provincial border in Anyuan, Jiangxi, and in 1911 another was constructed joining Zhuzhou with Wuchang, Hubei, on the Chang Jiang River (Stauffer, 1922: 90; Directory and Chronicles for China, 1922: 903). Hunan's first modern highway, not completed until 1922, was only some forty-five miles long, connecting Changsha with Xiangtan ("News from Central China," Weekly Review of the Far East, 1922: 352).

Hunan, with its 83,368 square miles, is somewhat larger than the state of Kansas, and in 1919 it had a population estimated at somewhat less than 30 million, giving an average density of 355 per square mile. Roughly 60 percent of these people were thought to be engaged in agriculture, although 93 percent lived in villages or towns of 10,000 or under. Hunan's urban population was concentrated in the Xiang River Valley and along the shores of Dongting Lake. Three Xiang River Valley cities had populations greater than 100,000. Changsha, the capital, had roughly 250,000 people, while Xiangtan was second with 200,000, and Hengyang was third with approximately 100,000. Changde, which also had about 200,000 people, was the only city with a population over 100,000 that was not in the Xiang River Valley. It is situated at the western edge of the retention basin, at the point where the Yuan River enters the lake (Stauffer, 1922: 90-91). These cities, particularly Changsha, were commercial and craft centers, producing a plethora of handicraft items. Shops manufacturing and selling silk, porcelain, ramie cloth, lacquer, gunny-bags, slate, cotton, leather shoes, hats, straw-matting, furniture and other wooden products, umbrellas, incense, picture mountings, iron cutlery, eyeglasses, various kinds of oil and candles, writing brushes, pencils, and printed materials lined the narrow streets.<sup>1</sup>

Hunan's wealth had promoted a rich scholarly tradition. Changsha, an ancient city which traces its origins back to the latter part of the Zhou dynasty (1122-255 B.C.), was especially prominent as an intellectual center during the Southern Song dynasty (1127-1280 A.D.). Zhu Xi (1130-1200 A.D.), the father of neo-Confucian orthodoxy, lectured at the Yuelu Academy, just

across the Xiang River from Changsha. The Chengnan Academy, located outside Changsha's southern gate, also dated from the Southern Sung (Li Rui, 1957: 12-13). Hunan's academic prominence continued into the Yuan dynasty (1279-1367 A.D.): with thirty-seven academies, it ranked fourth in the empire, after Jiangxi (seventy-three), Zhejiang (sixty-two), and Fujian (fifty-five) (Ho Ping-ti, 1964: 229-235). In spite of the abundance of academies, however, the number of Hunanese degree holders, and thus officials, was quite small until the middle of the nineteenth century (Ho Ping-ti, 1964: 229-235; Ch'en, 1965: 24).<sup>2</sup>

Hunanese underrepresentation in officialdom underwent a dramatic change after the Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864). The Taipings had begun as a religious sect in the mountains of south China. They were the followers of a young scholar who had failed the official exams and who subsequently underwent religious conversion and proclaimed himself the son of the Christian Heavenly Father, the younger brother of Jesus. In 1850 the Taiping movement suddenly erupted in an effort to establish the Heavenly Kingdom on earth, in China. Mobilizing and incorporating the poor, the displaced, and the disillusioned, they swept out of the southern mountains, through Hunan and down the Chang Jiang River to set up their capital at Nanjing, from which they attempted to take the rest of China. For thirteen years they ruled from Nanjing and came close to bringing the dynasty down.

The new prominence of Hunanese officials after the rebellion was directly related to the growing influence of Zeng Guofan, a Hunanese scholar-official. During the rebellion it had become clear that the dynastic armies were woefully inadequate, and so he organized the Hunan Braves, a well-trained, well-indoctrinated provincial army that led in the suppression of the Taiping. By 1865, five out of China's eight viceroys were Hunanese (Ch'en, 1965: 24). Excluding Zeng Guofan, among 182 persons associated with this army who left biographical records, "two reached the highest office of grand secretary and were ennobled as marquises; twenty-five became governors-general and governors; seventeen became financial and judicial commissioners; and five attained the same ranks but were not invested with office" (Ho Ping-ti, 1964: 218). The middle and lower echelons of the civil and military services were also filled with many Hunanese (Ch'en, 1965: 24).

Zeng Guofan's reputation, however, was not based solely on his military success. After the rebellion, he led the Tongzhi Restora-

tion (1862-1874), an effort to restore the traditional economy and the Confucian social order. Great Britain and her allies had defeated China in two small wars. The treaties that grew out of those coastal battles had seriously compromised Chinese sovereignty and begun the process of carving out Western-controlled enclaves in the empire's major commercial cities. The Restoration was designed to protect and support Confucian orthodoxy in the face of both peasant rebellion, that is, insubordination from below, and this growing Western challenge from without. Zeng's impact on this movement was so great that one historian has gone so far as to say that "[Zeng] so dominated his era that an appraisal of the man becomes an appraisal of the whole Restoration, and indeed of all modern Chinese efforts at conservative reconstruction" (Wright, 1969: 73).

While Zeng led conservative reform efforts at the national level, the Hunanese gentry at home did their part by essentially barring foreigners and their religion from the province. The anti-Christian attitudes of the gentry had not originated with the Taiping Rebellion (Teng and Fairbank, 1966: 29), but the gentry's "unpleasant experience with the Christianity-influenced Taipings and [their] pride in having led in their suppression" produced a particularly vehement and successful anti-Christian, anti-foreign campaign (Cohen, 1963: 36). Although there were at least eleven attempts to establish Christian missions in Hunan between 1863 and 1900, it was not until 1894 that one managed to achieve even temporary success. By 1900 there were five missions in Hunan, all of which were driven out during the Boxer Rebellion (Stauffer, 1922: 92). Methods of discouragement included riots and arson. In 1900 one American engineer pointed to Changsha as "marking the highest development of Chinese exclusiveness and dividing with Lhasa in Tibet the boast of shutting its gates tightly in the face of foreign contamination" (Parsons, 1900: 168).

The confidence of the Hunanese gentry, however, was sorely shaken in 1894 and 1895, when Japan humiliated China in the Sino-Japanese War. Japan, a former tributary of China, joined the Western powers' assault on the empire's traditional defense perimeter by taking the island of Taiwan and dislodging Chinese influence from Korea. Japan had become a treaty power, claiming equal rights with the Westerners, at the expense of China. The gentry now realized that "more than propaganda and hostile mobs was necessary to keep foreigners out of Hunan" (Lewis, 1965: 50).

The 1895 defeat provoked the Hunanese gentry into actually carrying out in practice, in their own province, a program that had been under discussion for several decades: "Learn the superior techniques of the barbarians to control the barbarians" (Hsu, 1970: 335). Western technology, owned and controlled by Chinese, would strengthen the country and protect the Confucian polity and its orthodoxy. If Hunanese themselves developed and controlled the modern sector, the foreigners and their religion, once again, could be blocked. During the tenure of Governor Chen Baozhen, both the local government and the gentry elite dedicated themselves to gaining control over the local mines, designing railroads and telegraph systems, introducing electricity, and adding practical Western studies to classical curriculum. Of course, the point of it all was to protect the traditional polity (Lewis, 1965: 46-57; Esherick, 1976: 13).

In 1897 Hunan's reformers established a School of Current Affairs in Changsha and invited Liang Qichao (1873-1929) to be its dean of Chinese studies. Liang was a distinguished young scholar who had excelled in the examination system and who had become an editor of a reform journal in Shanghai. His home was near Guangzhou, where Western trade had been confined until 1842, and he had become interested in the West at an early age. In 1890 he had gone to study with Kang Youwei (1858-1927), the first radical reformer to emerge from the ranks of the Chinese gentry. Kang argued that Confucius himself had been a reformer, and that China's problems could not be solved simply by adopting Western technology. He represented a new strain in Chinese reformist thinking that asserted that Western wealth and power were inseparably linked with Western political and social institutions. In China, too, the body politic would have to be changed. Both Kang and Liang would become the leaders of a movement demanding wide-sweeping reforms that challenged the privileges and the credentials of the traditional Chinese elite.

Liang Qichao's arrival in Changsha coincided with a new national crisis. In November 1897 Germany seized Jiaozhou Bay on the southern coast of the Shandong peninsula, and thus precipitated a "scramble for concessions" that threatened the complete partition of China. Chinese feared that the "slicing of the melon" had begun. In this charged atmosphere, young Hunanese at the School of Current Affairs gravitated toward Liang Qichao and his increasingly radical ideas (Esherick, 1976: 16-17).

The conservative reformers of Hunan soon became alarmed by the realization that Liang's influence constituted a potential challenge to their own leadership and the Chinese political status quo. In 1898, as Kang Youwei rose to prominence in the Manchu emperor's court and Liang gathered young Hunanese about him, they feared that a new Guangzhou group "was threatening to end the established Hunanese prominence in the imperial bureaucracy and even to control the youth of Hunan itself" (Esherick, 1976: 17).

Ye Dehui (1864-1927), a prominent member of the gentry and a merchant who dealt in rice, salt, and textiles (Esherick, 1976: 125), led the attack on the radicals. He objected to their attempts "to break down the barriers between the barbarians and China," and to their cultural relativism which suggested that since the earth was round, there was no "Middle Kingdom" (Lewis, 1965: 75). Students at the Yuelu Academy followed his lead and drew up a petition that attacked the radicals at the School of Current Affairs. They rejected the validity of the concepts of "people's political power" and "equality." "If the people can govern themselves, then what is the function of the emperor? This will lead to chaos in the empire." The petition concluded, "On examining their theories, [we see that they are] not the learnings of the West, but are in fact the learning of the Kang [Youwei]." The Academy had a mandate to teach the practical knowledge of the West, not to teach subversive Confucian doctrines (Lewis, 1965: 78).

Just as the suppression of the radicals in Hunan intensified in the summer of 1898, a new opportunity opened up for them in Beijing. In the spring of 1898 the Guangxu Emperor had appointed Kang Youwei to a powerful post, from which he began a frantic effort to modernize the Chinese polity, including the bureaucracy. From June 11 until September 20, some forty or fifty decrees issued from his office. Liang Qichao and one of his young Hunanese colleagues from the School for Current Affairs, Tan Sitong, joined Kang Youwei and the new national reform effort in Beijing. With few exceptions, however, conservative officials refused to carry out these measures. Rather, the reforms provoked an intense reaction from officialdom, who, allied with the Empress Dowager Ci Xi, put an end to their "Hundred Day Reforms." She put the Guangxu Emperor under house arrest, and Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao fled for their lives. But, the young Hunanese, Tan Sitong, did not. He stayed to become one of the six martyrs of 1898, proclaiming that "since time immemorial no revolution had succeeded without

bloodshed" (Hsu, 1970: 423-453; Hummel, 1943: 702-705).

The failure of the reform movement, the conservative reaction, and the martyrdom of Tan Sitong caused some young men, sons of the gentry, to abandon their hopes for reform within the system. They became the leaders of armed revolts. Japan became a refuge for those forced to flee and a breeding ground for reformist and revolutionary plotters. In 1900, the same year that a north China secret society, the Boxers, rebelled and provoked a conservative court to declare war on ten powers in an attempt to rid the country of foreigners, once and for all, Tang Caichang, a Hunanese student of Liang Qichao's and a close friend and colleague of the martyr Tan Sitong, was in Japan plotting. With rumors circulating that the Empress Dowager Ci Xi was going to depose the Guangxu Emperor, Tang came home to the central Chang Jiang area to lead a rebellion, based on secret societies, that encompassed Hunan, Hubei, and Anhui. His and his coconspirators' purpose had been to restore the Emperor to a powerful position in order to carry out a major structural change in the political system through his offices; but they failed, and Tang Caichang and the other leaders were executed (Esherick, 1976: 28-33).

But Tang Caichang was not the last Hunanese revolutionary to emerge from the Chinese student body in Japan. Both Huang Xing and Song Jiaoren would follow in his footsteps. Huang played a critical role in the successful overthrow of the dynasty in 1911, mobilizing not only students and secret societies, but cells within the new provincial armies as well (Hsueh, 1961: 78, 94-117). Song Jiaoren, too, played an important role in 1911, but he is most famous for organizing the Nationalist Party (Guomindang) in 1912 and leading that party to victory in the first national election (Liew, 1971: 104-126, 172-190). But that is getting ahead of the story in Hunan.

After the reaction of 1898 and the suppression of Tang Caichang's revolt, Hunan's conservative reformers became more conservative and less reformist. Most of the reforms that took place from 1900 to 1906 were the result of national reform programs carried out in the province by nationally appointed officials. After the humiliating defeat of the Boxers, the Manchu court itself had conceded the need for change. Modern education had to replace the classical curriculum; new, modern armies had to be trained; and provincial and national assemblies would be formed. Of equal significance, the foreigners finally succeeded in truly opening up Hunan to their

influence when Changsha began operating as a treaty port in 1904. The attitude of most Hunanese toward foreigners, however, had not changed, and the fact that Hunan was opened by threat of force at the same time that a modern student body was massing in the new schools guaranteed that there would be trouble ahead. Furthermore, the foreigners were making new and more profound demands. Missionary proselytizing and foreign trade increased markedly after 1900, and by then the foreigners had the right by treaty to build factories in opened ports. Foreigners were showing increased interest in mining and railroad rights at the same time that taxes had to be raised to pay the harsh indemnities that had resulted from the Boxer Rebellion. "It is only when we appreciate the speed and the scope of the Western impact on Hunan that we can understand the vehemence of the students' opposition to imperialism" (Esherick, 1976: 40).

Once again conservative officials tried to suppress student activism, and once again students deserted their schools in an attempt to lead secret societies in revolt. But in the 1906 rebellion the demand was for a republic, not the restoration of power to the Guangxu Emperor. It took 17,500 regular army troops to put down this Ping-Liu-Li Uprising, and a bloodbath followed, taking a high toll among both secret society members and students (Esherick, 1976: 58-65).

In the midst of this confrontation between young radicals and entrenched conservatives, a new reformist elite emerged from the Hunanese gentry, and by 1907 it would triumph over the conservatives. It was a somewhat younger group, and more urban than its predecessors. They, like the conservatives, had traditional gentry credentials, and, like the students, they were anti-imperialist. But they were moderate men who preferred a responsible path of modernization, which was now possible owing to the various national reforms emanating from Beijing. In particular, they sought to use the new liberal programs of local industrialization and constitutional monarchy. They also sponsored many of the new schools that brought the students to the cities, and they became their protectors against conservative authorities (Esherick, 1976: 104). From 1907 to 1913 they were the dominant power in Hunan. Their leader was Tan Yankai, the son of a wealthy official who had ended a distinguished career as the viceroy of Guangzhou. The son had been a precocious student and had done exceedingly well in the examination system and thus held the rare distinction of membership

in the Hanlin Academy. In 1909 he was elected president of Hunan's first Provincial Assembly (Boorman, 1968: III, 220; Esherick, 1976: 44).

*MAO STUDIES AS HUNAN'S REFORMIST  
ELITE IS SWAMPED BY WARLORD POLITICS*

It was only after this new reformist elite rose to power in the province and eclipsed the conservatives that a young peasant youth, Mao Zedong (1893-1976), began his ascent into the modern provincial elite. Unlike Tan Yankai, Mao was not born into the upper echelons of Hunanese society. His father had been a poor peasant, landless and debt-ridden but ambitious, who by hard work and frugality became a small landowner and moneylender in the village of Shaoshan. He had sent Mao Zedong, his oldest son, to a traditional village school to master the classics for purely practical reasons. He wanted someone to keep his books, to write letters, and to quote the classics for him in legal disputes (Ch'en, 1965: 17-22; Snow, 1968: 133). After five years of schooling, from age eight to thirteen (ca. 1901-1906), Mao stayed home and farmed. In 1908, when Mao was fifteen, his father arranged his marriage and presented him with a wife. Mao objected to the marriage and would have nothing to do with the woman. Shortly after her arrival in his home he went to live with a friend in the county seat of Xiangtan, and he did not return for six months (Han, 1972: 26-27). In 1910 when his father was about to apprentice him to a rice dealer, Mao asked to go to another sort of school where "more was taught of the 'new knowledge of the West.'" The educational methods, also, were quite 'radical'" (Snow, 1968: 136). His father agreed to this modern education only after he was convinced that it would increase his son's earning power (Han, 1972: 29).

And thus it was that at the age of sixteen Mao entered the Dongshan Primary School in the county seat of Xiangxiang, his mother's home (Ch'en, 1965: 17-22). His first step into the provincial elite was a hard one. Not only was he older than the landlords' sons who made up the student body, but he was from outside the county. Obviously poorer and possessed of distinct peasant ways, he soon became the object of ridicule and practical jokes. However, his academic achievements eventually brought him acceptance, and one year later, in the summer of 1911, he was ready to enter the Xiangxiang Middle School, located in the provincial capital, Chang-



sha (Siao-yu, 1961: 18-23; Ch'en, 1965: 22-23).

Mao, at the age of seventeen, walked the sixty miles from his home to the capital. For him, Changsha was the big city, full of people and schools, and the site of the governor's yamen (Snow, 1968: 139). It was also the center of provincial politics, and no sooner had Mao started school than the Revolution of 1911 broke out on October 10, 1911, in the neighboring province of Hubei. Within days it had spread to Hunan. By February 1912 the Manchu rulers had abdicated and China was a republic. The Qing dynasty had ruled China for almost three hundred years. The dynastic system was two thousand years old. On the face of it, it was a momentous event.

But things are not always what they seem. Both sides, the revolutionaries and Qing dynasty officialdom, afraid to prolong the battle in an effort to gain a decisive victory lest the foreigners intervene in the civil war, compromised. The dynasty had abdicated, but the presidency of the new republic had gone to Yuan Shikai, a powerful dynastic official with a reputation for administrative ability and reformist inclinations (Young, 1977: 50-55). In Hunan there was parallel continuity. Tan Yankai, the leader of the new liberal elite, was not a revolutionary, but when the revolution came, he and his associates rode the tide. Tan became Hunan's military governor, and when the republicans set out in 1912 to organize the National Party, they invited Tan to chair its Hunan branch (Esherick, 1976: 245).

Mao, too, was swept into the ranks of the revolution. After a recruiter had visited his school, he enlisted in the antidynastic forces. He spent six months as a private, but never saw military action. And this upwardly mobile son of the village was so proud of his student status that he was unwilling to carry water into the city for the officers, a soldier's chore, and thus used part of his meager salary to buy his quota from the local water peddlers. Mustered out in February 1912, he began looking for another school (Snow, 1968: 142).

Overwhelmed by the choices available and highly susceptible to advertisements and suggestions from his friends, he considered everything from soap-making to police academies, and he actually enrolled in a new school of commerce (for one month) and the Hunan First Middle School (for six months). Dissatisfied, he ended up in the provincial library, where he pursued his own course of study, reading Chinese translations of Montesquieu's *Esprit des lois*,

Rousseau's Du Contrat social, world history, geography, and Greek mythology, and many of the bourgeois classics, such as Adam Smith's The Wealth of Nations, Darwin's On the Origin of Species, Huxley's Evolution and Ethics, Mill's Logic, and Spencer's Study of Sociology (Ch'en, 1965: 32). His father, however, put an end to such self-education. Now won over to the idea that his son should study to become an official, he insisted that Mao enroll in a proper school (Han, 1972: 41).

Mao's choice of school this time was crucial. In early 1913 he was admitted to Fourth Normal School, which was incorporated into First Normal School in the autumn of the same year. First Normal School, with 400 students in 1913, was a large and prestigious school. (The province had no university.) During the five years that he was a student there, Mao established the relationships with teachers and fellow students that would make him a student leader. Even after he had graduated in 1918, he would remain closely tied to the school and his associates there, and through them and their contacts emerge as a leading junior member of the provincial elite by 1920.

By entering First Normal School, Mao had taken another large step into the ranks of an elite that had dominated provincial politics since 1907, but he took it just at the time when that elite was removed from power by outside forces. President Yuan Shikai, a national bureaucrat by training, was not inclined to share his power with the provincial elites, or with the Nationalist Party, which had appealed to their federalist sentiments (Young, 1977: 106-115). By February 1913 it was clear that the Nationalist Party had won a majority in the first parliamentary elections and intended to control the cabinet and, potentially, the president. On March 22, the chief organizer of this parliamentary success and the premier-elect, the Hunanese revolutionary Song Jiaoren, was gunned down by an assassin. An investigation produced documents that implicated a man close to Yuan. Soon thereafter Yuan secured a foreign loan which further compromised Chinese sovereignty and which Nationalists considered illegal. When in June Yuan began dismissing southern military governors who were not part of the Northern Beiyang Army that he controlled and who were members of the Nationalist Party, the "Second Revolution" broke out against him. By September 12, 1913, Yuan had defeated the revolutionaries (Hsueh, 1961: 152-159). Governor Tan Yankai was on the losing side, and he had to resign in October 1913. He was re-

placed by a northern militarist (McDonald, 1978: 21). Thus, the Hunanese liberal elite began the first of its many years out of power. Tan would remain out of power most of the time and sometimes, literally, fighting to get back in for the next decade.

But President Yuan Shikai's days were numbered. In 1915 his strong man image was seriously undermined by further Japanese pressure on China. Yuan's inability to resist most of the Twenty-one Demands that Japan forced on China weakened his position. In the face of both foreign and domestic difficulties, he sought refuge in traditional forms. In December 1915 he had himself "elected" emperor (Young, 1977: 222). But opposition to Yuan's imperial plans was so overwhelming that his power disintegrated, and he died while making preparations to flee the capital on June 6, 1916. Tan Yankai was thus able to return to his post as governor of Hunan in August 1916.

The coalition of forces that Yuan left behind him, however, proved unequal to the task of national reconciliation and legitimate constitutional government. In June 1917 militarists forced the dissolution of parliament, and in August dissidents established a rival government in Guangzhou. In September the Beijing government forced Tan Yankai to vacate his post again so that it could secure Hunan for an attack on the South (McDonald, 1978: 30-31). By the end of that war in 1918, Hunan was once more under the thumb of a northern warlord. Then in 1919 the northern coalition itself split (Chi, 1976: 30-31). In the absence of a strong central government, the regional military commanders — the warlords — became the true rulers of China. Although there was nominally a central government in Beijing throughout the ten years from 1916 to 1926, it was increasingly ineffective and exceedingly unstable (Nathan, 1976: 59). During these years China was ostensibly ruled by six different heads of state and two men who presumed the title of emperor, and twenty-five successive cabinets rotated around the pivot of Beijing (Sheridan, 1966: 10). And the governments at Guangzhou were no more effective than those in Beijing. In fact, political power in the South became even more fragmented than in the North (Chi, 1976: 53-54, 132-133).

Hunan was especially hard-hit by warlord devastation. During times of peace and prosperity, the fact that the main transportation route from Beijing to Guangzhou ran through the Xiang River Valley was an asset. During these chaotic times, however, its strategic position meant that Hunan was not only in the southern sweep of the

Beijing warlord arena, but also a base from which Northern armies attempted to subdue the south, and it was a desirable prize for various ambitious southern armies. There was war in Hunan in thirteen out of the fifteen years from 1912 to 1926 (Ch'en, 1965: 43n.).

These wars brought not only killing and destruction. The conscription of peasants and the seizure of their carts and animals, the commandeering of porters and ricksha pullers, and the take-over of railroads dislocated communications and transport. And the armies were expensive. Irregular and confiscatory taxation plagued both urban and rural communities (Sheridan, 1966: 15-29). Few warlords had any misgivings about minting debased coins or printing too much paper money. This "reduced the credibility of the money economy and pauperized the common people, among whom the bulk of the currency circulated" (Chi, 1976: 171).

Banditry and looting were also commonplace. The disruption of the agricultural sector owing to warfare, confiscation, and conscription put an added burden on an already crisis-ridden countryside. Numerous jobless and hungry men became willing recruits for the warlord armies in return for little more than meager food, clothing, occasional pay, and the chance to loot. And some displaced peasants who did not join the armies or left their armies simply turned to banditry (Sheridan, 1966: 17-18; Chi, 1976: 80-81, 93).

Sometimes chambers of commerce would try to protect their cities and towns by offering money to nearby armies in return for promises that they would be left unmolested. These payments, however, did not always guarantee security. In 1922, for example, the Chang Jiang port of Jinjiang, Jiangxi (Hunan's neighbor to the east), gave 15,000 yuan to an army. Unfortunately, the officers kept most of the money, and the soldiers felt cheated. They made up for their loss by terrorizing the town for two days, looting and burning (Report of Dr. J. H. Gray, YMCA Historical Library, X951.09, Box 74).

Schools, like other publicly funded institutions, suffered as well. Warlords deprived them of their monies, and marauding troops sometimes took over their dormitories and turned them into temporary barracks (Stauffer, 1922: 99). Nor were teachers' salaries secure. In February 1922 the warlord governor of Hunan owed its teachers some 240,000 yuan in back pay for the previous ten months ("News from Central China," Weekly Review of the Far East, Vol.

19 [February 4, 1922]: 444). Chinese intellectuals were deeply disturbed and sorely disappointed by the failure of republicanism in their country. The Revolution of 1911 had not restored or revived China; the nation had become little more than a collection of warring states (Yu Loo-tang, 1925: n.p.).

*AS A STUDENT, MAO BECOMES INVOLVED  
IN THE MASS EDUCATION MOVEMENT AND THE  
NEW PEOPLES STUDY SOCIETY*

It was in this politically volatile atmosphere that Mao developed as a student leader. The issues of the day questioned the very foundations of society: Why had the republic failed, and what could be done to save it? What was wrong with China that these same institutions that had made the West strong had made China weak? The first organization that Mao joined was the Student Friends' Society (Xue you hui) (Xiao, 1959: 19). Its members sought to improve the nation and its people through educational reform and the development of physical culture and to promote friendship among the student body. In 1915 Mao became its corresponding secretary, and in 1917 the membership elected him chairman of three of its committees (Cheng, 1973: 71). One of these committees was the Education Research Section, and as chairman, Mao became involved in the mass education movement.

This movement drew its support from reformist intellectuals who believed that democracy was the key to a strong nation and that democracy required a literate citizenry. Schools for illiterate adults had appeared in China as early as 1907 (Hayford, 1973: 4-5). After the establishment of the Republic in 1912, interest and activity in mass education continued to grow. Cai Yuanpei, its first minister of education, was a promoter of popular education, and the national government encouraged the founding of public libraries, museums, traveling exhibits, and schools for the illiterate (literally, schools to repair learning, buxi xuexiao). In 1915 the Popular Education Society was formed in Beijing, and for the next four years it published large quantities of literature and operated a Model Lecture Bureau (Hayford, 1973: 5).

World War I also indirectly acted as a catalyst for mass education. There were a number of Chinese students already in France before the war recruited by the Society for Frugal Study in France, a work-study program organized by prominent anarchist-influenced

intellectuals in 1912 (Scalapino and Yu, 1961: 45). And by 1916 nearly 200,000 Chinese workers had arrived in France to work behind the lines for the Allied effort in labor-starved Europe (Chesneaux, 1968: 138-140). The close proximity between the students and workers overseas produced a plethora of industrial and social organizations, including schools for illiterate Chinese workers (Chow, 1967: 36-38). Cai Yuanpei, the former minister of education, was also in France, and he began editing a magazine for the workers written in classical Chinese but synopsisized in the vernacular language and in romanization. When Cai returned to China in 1916 to become chancellor of Beijing University, he started similar schools for university employees (Hayford, 1973: 32-33).

In Changsha, as well, mass education was a popular, but poorly funded cause. A literacy school started in 1911 folded because it could not find a proper facility, and in 1912 a lecture bureau had a short-lived existence. But in 1913 the Hunan Popular Education Journal (Hunan tongsu jiaoyu bao) succeeded. For years thereafter it published stories, novels, poems, and eventually, news (Hunan sheng zhengfu mishubu di wu ke, 1934: 558-560).

In the spring of 1917 the staff of First Normal School and its experimental elementary school, Xiuye, decided to take up the challenge of mass education and started a night school for illiterate citizens. The staff, however, could not sustain the efforts and abandoned the project. In the autumn of the same year the Student Friends' Society rekindled the project. Mao Zedong, as chairman of the Education Research Section, had suggested that the students start a night school for workers employed in the vicinity of the school (Zhou, 1959: 100-101), which was located near several factories outside Changsha's South Gate (Li Rui, 1957: 60).

Mao was the director of this night school for about one year, from the autumn of 1917 to September 1918 (Li Rui, 1957: 62-63), and he seems to have taken his responsibilities quite seriously. He saw the night school as an opportunity to overcome the great educational, social, political, and ideological gap that separated the radical students from the mass of the citizenry. The masses, by and large, had been anti-Manchu, but they had not been pro-reform. They had not followed the students and the elite reformers on their path toward Westernization. An attitude of mutual suspicion and social distance prevailed. Ordinary citizens under-

stood little or nothing about the turmoil in the schools, and the students looked upon the rest of society as the enemy and evil.

Mao saw this mass illiteracy as a major stumbling block on the road toward modernization. He believed that universal education existed in the West, and that it went a long way toward explaining Western success. One could not hope to develop the country as long as its major social forces, the workers and peasants, remained illiterate and hostile to elite-sponsored reform. He admitted that social conditions in China were different from those in the West, but he insisted that everyone should at least have the opportunity to study.

He was also critical of the elite and their schools. He lamented the fact that many students and faculty members were careerists and seemed to care more about their own economic interests than about the fate of the nation. And, he claimed, the schools did little to change that. The system produced effete pedants. "The teachers propound the texts and proclaim their subjects, while the students memorize like wooden puppets." Outside the classroom, student-teacher contacts were almost nonexistent. Moreover, the subject matter in most courses did not address the real problems in this world. It had to be made relevant and it had to be presented in an interesting way. The night school would give First Normal's third and fourth year students an opportunity not only to educate the workers but also to improve their own teaching, both in terms of the material itself and the way in which it was presented (Li Rui, 1957: 60).

The night school began with over 120 workers attending. Tuition was free and the school supplied the materials. The curriculum included reading, writing, arithmetic, and the use of the abacus. A section called "General Knowledge" introduced a smattering of history, geography, science, ethics, hygiene, business, government, and economics. Mao himself taught history, which he saw as a way to build patriotism as well as to give the students a sense of historical perspective (Li Rui, 1957: 62).

In the school's "Daily Record," which was often in Mao's handwriting, there are many comments which foreshadow later Communist schools. Students were instructed to come to school dressed in whatever was convenient. Teachers were told not to "talk too much," not to use difficult vocabulary, and to relate the subject matter to concrete, everyday experience. In a physics class where the teacher had failed to arouse any interest, Mao came in to talk

of light bulbs and how they work and what makes steamships and trains run. The point, he wrote, was to arouse the students' curiosity.

It was also in this school that Mao discovered the difficulty of using the classical Chinese writing style to instruct the ordinary citizen. It still did not occur to him, even in 1917, to give up the classical language altogether and just use the vernacular. His compromise was to write out the lessons in classical Chinese and explain these texts in class in the vernacular, and then give the texts to the students to take home and study. "I did it this way in history class, and the results were very lively," he noted (Li Rui, 1957: 62-63).

Mao's involvement in First Normal's Student Friends' Society was soon followed by his participation in a citywide organization of like-minded individuals. In 1918 he became a founding member and leader of the New People's Study Society, an idealistic, elite association of friends drawn from several Changsha schools. These earnest young men and women searched the abundant radical and reformist literature for some means of saving their country.

These students, and Mao in particular, were influenced strongly by Yang Changji (1870-1920), an eminent philosophy professor at First Normal. Yang had studied the Chinese classics and then had gone abroad in 1902 and continued his study of philosophy in Japan, England, and Germany. After ten years of overseas study, he returned to teach at First Normal. There he led the students through a rigorous examination of traditional and reform-minded Chinese philosophers as well as such Western thinkers as Rousseau, Kant, and Spencer (Wakeman, 1973: 157-8). He also introduced the students to New Youth (Xin qingnian) magazine, which was published in Shanghai. Chen Duxiu, its founder, ardently believed that everything old in China was corrupt or debilitating and that Chinese youth had to destroy completely the old ways and create a culture that was new and vital. The model was usually an idealized West.

***AFTER GRADUATION MAO ATTAINS PROMINENCE  
AS A JOURNALIST AND ACTIVIST IN ANTI-  
WARLORD REFORMIST POLITICS***

In 1918 Yang Changji left Changsha to take up a post at Beijing University. Later that year he wrote to some of his students in Changsha encouraging them to come to Beijing and study French



so that they might participate in a work-study program in France. Mao, who had just graduated, was among those who went to Beijing in September 1918 (Zhou, 1959: 101), but he did not go to France. After Yang helped him get a job in the Beijing University library for subsistence wages, he used his spare time to explore the capital and visit with Yang Kaihui, Yang Changji's daughter, with whom he had fallen in love (Chow, 1967: 36-7; Ch'en, 1965: 52; Snow, 1968: 152; Cheng, 1973: 73).

According to Mao's own account of his life, it was during this first trip to the nation's capital that he developed an interest in anarchism. Some of its ideals, too, were added to his "vague passions about 'nineteenth-century democracy,' utopianism, and old-fashioned liberalism." But, he said, there was nothing vague about his antimilitarism or anti-imperialism (Snow, 1968: 149). In the spring of 1919 he left Beijing and Yang Kaihui to go to Shanghai to see his friends off for France, and then he returned home to Changsha. There he got a part-time job as a history teacher in the Xiuye Primary School, the demonstration school attached to First Normal and located within its compound (Han, 1972: 72; Zhou, 1959: 65). He was home just in time for the local manifestations of the antimilitarist and anti-imperialist May Fourth movement.

The movement had begun as an intellectual and cultural campaign to criticize and reform the undemocratic or unscientific elements in the Chinese tradition. In particular, its proponents criticized the patriarchal family for stunting individual growth and initiative, especially with regard to women, and they advocated abandoning the classical Chinese writing style and adopting vernacular Chinese for aesthetic as well as political reasons. This movement became highly politicized in the spring of 1919, when the settlement of World War I at Versailles became known. The Chinese had expected to regain the concessions in Shandong Province, which Japan had seized from Germany in 1914. Their hopes were based on the Fourteen Points, and particularly on the principle of national self-determination. There was no doubt that Shandong was a part of China. What the Chinese public did not know was that there had been several secret treaties signed between Japan and its European allies and, indeed, between Japan and the military government in Beijing which guaranteed Japan's right to keep these concessions. When these treaties were revealed at Versailles, China's case was severely weakened, and Woodrow Wilson sacrificed China's interests as well as the interests of other countries, in order to get

Japan and Italy to participate in the new League of Nations.

When the Chinese public found out that Japan would be allowed to keep these concessions, they were outraged. They were angry at Japan and at the Beijing government. On May 4, 1919, the students started demonstrating and demanding, among other things, that China refuse to sign the treaty. The demonstrations were not entirely peaceful and led to the arrest of many students. This student protest rapidly spread to the merchant sector and to China's workers. The demonstrations, strikes, and boycotts began in Beijing, but soon spread to Shanghai and other Chinese cities, including Changsha.

As soon as the news of the May Fourth incident reached Changsha, students began leafletting the city with condemnations of the Versailles settlement, the Beijing government, and Japan. Zhang Jingyao, the military governor of Hunan, tried to suppress such activities, without much success (JBN, 1959: 392); that he tried to suppress the movement meant in fact that he himself became one of its targets. And Zhang Jingyao made an exceptionally good target. He was not only a member of the Northern clique that had signed the secret treaty allowing Japan to stay, he was quite closely connected to its leader, Duan Qirui. To attack Zhang was to attack Duan. Furthermore, even by warlord standards, Zhang was considered to be a particularly corrupt and incompetent militarist who had gotten his position in Hunan only because of his relationship with Duan (Chi, 1976: 21).

Changsha's intellectual elite, in general, sided with the students. They had no sympathy for Zhang, who had "gagged their thoughts and cut their pay" (Zhou, 1959: 74). After he forbid the local newspapers to print any news of the movement on May 11, the directors of the Provincial Education Association called a meeting of all principals in Changsha to discuss what might be done (HNLSTL, 1959: No. 1, 304). On May 28 the Education Association met with the Merchants' Association in order to organize a boycott against Japanese goods under the name of a campaign to "Support Chinese Products." The students then organized the Hunan Federation of Student Unions on June 3, appointed themselves the enforcers of the boycott (JBN, 1959: 391-396), and vigorously collected and burned Japanese goods found in local stores. The New People's Study Society and Mao Zedong were prime movers behind this student activity (Cheng, 1973: 76; Zhou, 1959: 67-69; Xiao, 1959: 10).

Aroused and concerned by the students' idealistic enthusiasm as

the May Fourth activities accelerated, some of these educators established the Strengthen Learning Society (Jian xue hui). This organization was fundamentally reformist and organized in part to steer the students down "constructive" paths. Aside from holding Sunday morning lectures on such topics as "Fundamental Errors in the Chinese View of Life and Death," "Being Human," and "How Can We Adapt Dewey's Theories of Education," the society promoted various reforms in some of the Changsha schools. The use of the vernacular, the admission of women into previously all-male schools, and the relaxing of various parietal rules (which allowed women to cut their hair, form student associations, and mix with male students for educational and political purposes) all reflected the general mood of the May Fourth movement (Zhou, 1959: 75).

By December, hostilities between students and the warlord government were escalating. The military commander, Zhang Jingxi, a younger brother of Zhang Jingyao, used force to break up a group of students who had attempted to seize and burn confiscated Japanese goods. A demonstration against the Zhangs followed, and it too was broken up by the military. Immediately thereafter, delegates from the Hunan Federation of Students met to discuss what they should do. Mao (who was no longer a student) was there, and he supported those people who wanted to call a strike.

Even though some delegates were reluctant to go out on strike, Mao did not give up. He was convinced that a strike would succeed since almost everyone in the province was angry about Zhang Jingyao's mismanagement of Hunanese affairs. According to Zhou Shizhao (who lived in the same building as Mao at the time and taught with him at the primary school), Mao thought that the students would go on strike if they realized that there would be some degree of elite support behind them. He met with some of the "core element" of the Strengthen Learning Society, including his former headmaster Yi Peiji (Siao-yu, 1961: 30), got their endorsement for the strike, and returned to the Federation of Student Unions. Emphasizing that the strike was a struggle against imperialism, a "sell-out" government, and "feudal warlords," he challenged the students to stop merely talking about patriotism and social reform and do something. The strike was declared, and all schools participated with the exception of two girls' schools (Zhou, 1959: 65, 85-87).

At the same time that Mao was mobilizing students in conjunction with the Strengthen Education Society, he was developing into a fine editor and essayist. He even received some recognition nationally. His first journal, the Xiang River Critic (Xiang jiang pinglun), began publishing on July 14, 1919, and went through five issues before the warlord Zhang Jingyao suppressed it in August. Fu Sinian, the editor of New Tide (Xin chao), a leading publication in Beijing, described Mao's weekly as "one of the five or six best magazines in the nation," ranking it along with New Youth and four others (Chow, 1967: 348-349).

One of the more significant articles published in Xiang River Critic was Mao's "The Great Union of the Popular Masses," which two Beijing publications highly recommended to their readers (Chow, 1967: 348-349). The article, written before Mao became a Marxist, demonstrates the very close connection in his mind, and in many people's minds at the time, between democratic reform and social reform, on the one hand, and nationalistic anti-imperialistic goals, on the other. It had a strong Tolstoian populist flavor: the Chinese people possessed great intrinsic energy, which once released would burst forth and bring about a true Chinese Golden Age (Schram, 1969: 162-164).

After the Xiang River Critic was banned, Mao assumed the editorship of New Hunan (Xin Hunan) in its seventh issue. New Youth magazine, in its December 1, 1919, issue, noted the change. "The content of the weekly New Hunan has undergone a great change beginning with issue no. 7." To demonstrate the change to their readership, New Youth reprinted the new manifesto, which listed the journal's purposes as "criticizing society, reforming thought, introducing pedagogical innovation, and discussing problems." The editors of New Youth also highly recommended several articles, including one entitled "What Is Socialism? What Is Anarchism?" ("Changsha shehui mianmian guan," in Xin qingnian, Vol. 7, No. 1 [December 1, 1919]: 104-105). After Zhang Jingyao suppressed New Hunan, Mao resorted to publishing his articles in the Dagong bao, a daily newspaper in Changsha. In November he published nine articles, all on the theme of women in Chinese society, a series prompted by the dramatic sedan-chair suicide of a prospective bride (Ch'en, 1965: 65).<sup>3</sup> Yet another piece by Mao, "Regulations of the Problem Discussion Society," was printed in the October 1919 Beijing University Monthly (Beijing daxue yuekan). In this article — part of a larger debate over whether or not China's troubles

should be approached according to ideological solutions (Marxism, socialism, anarchism, and so forth) or by nonideological, problem-by-problem solutions (pragmatism) — Mao came down firmly on the fence. He maintained that it was impossible to separate pragmatic approaches from ideological solutions. The approach to any given problem had to be based on some theory. Ideally one should study all the related theoretical material before approaching a problem, and ideally, one should also make empirical, on-the-spot investigations of the problem, and not simply rely on the theoretical literature (Cheng, 1973: 77).

The May Fourth movement activities in Hunan eventually culminated in a full-fledged anti-Zhang Jingyao campaign. Soon after the student strike was declared in December, the anti-Zhang forces in Hunan decided to exploit a contradiction between the warlords in order to get rid of Zhang. In 1919 the Northern coalition was splitting and the Hunanese elite hoped to seize this opportunity to return the governorship to Tan Yankai. Wu Peifu, a militarist unhappy with the treatment he was receiving as a member of the Northern clique, might be persuaded to withdraw his troops from Hunan, leaving Zhang exposed to an attack from Tan, who was then sitting in the mountains of southern Hunan with a small army of his own. Old "Granny Tan," a Hanlin scholar, had resorted to arms. As part of this effort to help bring Tan Yankai back to power, delegations were sent to Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou to mobilize Hunanese opinion in those cities against Zhang. Mao was on the delegation sent to Beijing (McDonald, 1978: 36-37; Zhou, 1959: 86-87; Ch'en, 1965: 66-70).

#### *MAO'S SECOND TRIP NORTH INTRODUCES HIM TO MARXISM*

This second trip to Beijing turned out to be highly significant. Mao became the head of a news agency to promote antimilitarist agitation, and he started reading seriously about Russia and its revolution (Snow, 1968: 155). While talking to Deng Zhongxia, a Hunanese student at Beijing University, Mao became interested in Marxism, and his former professor, Yang Changji, supplied him with a copy of Kirkupp's History of Socialism, which inspired him to read other socialist and Marxist publications, including the Communist Manifesto, Kautsky's Class Struggle, and Engels'

Socialism: Utopian and Scientific. It also must have been a sad time for Mao and Yang's daughter, Kaihui, for the professor died at the end of January 1920 (Schram, 1966: 56).

Mao's introduction to Marxism was also influenced by Li Dazhao and Chen Duxiu, two intellectuals often referred to as the founders of the Chinese Communist Party. Li was a colleague of Yang Changji's, a professor at Beijing University and its head librarian. It had been through Li that Yang had gotten Mao his job in that library in 1918. Li most likely had been engaged in his study of Marxism when Mao worked for him, for Li published "My Marxist Views" on May 1, 1919 (Meisner, 1973: 90). This close physical proximity between Li and Mao, and the fact that Li's work contains the seeds of what several decades later would become Maoism, might suggest that Li's influence on Mao was paramount. But that does not seem to have been the case. Mao describes that first trip to Beijing as a foray into anarchism, not Marxism. He did say, in the context of his second trip, that "Under [ Li Dazhao] , as assistant librarian at Peking [Beijing] National University, I had rapidly developed toward Marxism . . ." (emphasis added) (Snow, 1968: 157), but he makes no mention of any further contacts with Li on this second "Marxist" trip. Only one of Mao's contemporaries, Zhou Shizhao, suggests that Mao was close to Li during this second trip, and he was not with Mao in Beijing (Zhou, 1959: 88).

Mao left Beijing in April and once again proceeded to Shanghai, where he saw Chen Duxiu, the editor of *New Youth* magazine (Ch'en, 1965: 54-66). Curiously enough, it is Chen that Mao said influenced him and his Marxism; "I had discussed with Ch'en, on my second visit to Shanghai, the Marxist books that I had read, and Ch'en's own assertions of belief had deeply impressed me at what was probably a critical period in my life" (Snow, 1968: 157). Mao gave Chen this credit in 1936, after Chen had been removed from the Party's leadership in 1927 and expelled from the Party in 1929. Li, on the other hand, had been executed in 1927 and as a martyr was permanently enthroned in the Party's good graces. That Mao was willing merely to mention Li and to emphasize Chen's role in his intellectual development is striking. It is also surprising since Chen was a highly orthodox Marxist who, as a Communist, never gave up the idea that the Communist revolution would be based on workers and who consistently denied any significant role to peasants. Given that Mao would eventually lead a peasant-based rev-

olution, one would think that his primary mentor had been Li, but Mao indicates that it was Chen, and this points to an unexpected but highly orthodox beginning.

Mao stayed in Shanghai for about three months, from April to July, and to support himself while he was there, he became an urban worker for the one and only time in his life, washing and delivering laundry (Ch'en, 1965: 66). It was also during Mao's stay that in May 1920 Chen took the initial steps leading to the formation of the Chinese Communist Party by establishing a Provisional Central Committee (Harrison, 1972: 28). Mao told Edgar Snow that by the time that he returned to Changsha in July 1920, "I had become in theory and to some extent in action, a Marxist, and from this time on, I considered myself a Marxist" (Snow, 1968: 155).

#### *MAO'S FACTION RETURNS TO POWER IN HUNAN*

Mao's sojourn as a worker and a developing Marxist in Shanghai ended abruptly owing to events in Hunan. Zhang Jingyao fled, after setting the city of Changsha on fire, and Tan Yankai was about to begin his third (or fourth, if one counts his nominal rule from December 1917 to March 1918) try at the governorship. Mao's old associates in the Strengthen Learning Society were now moving into positions of responsibility and power. In particular, Yi Peiji, Mao's former headmaster at First Normal, became first secretary to the governor and to the military commander, president of the Hunan Education Association, associate director of the Provincial Library, and director of First Normal School. And Mao, in turn, became director of the Xiuye Primary School, where he had taught in 1919 (Siao-yu, 1961: 174). He rented a house outside the city wall in a neighborhood known as Clear Water Pond, and some six months later he married Yang Kaihui (Han, 1972: 86, 88). No sooner had Mao become a Marxist than he became a member of an elite in power.

Mao's response to this somewhat anomalous situation appears to have been consistent with a revolutionary stage theory that assumed that democratic reformers once in power would modernize China and guarantee the democratic processes and civil liberties that would allow the proletariat to raise its consciousness and eventually organize itself for a socialist revolution. It was a

relatively long-range view of proletarian revolution. On the one hand, Mao applauded Tan's victory, and on the other hand, he used his own position in that elite to press for more liberal and democratic programs that would allow mass organizations to form and mature. On July 6, 1920, he and other members of the Hunan Reconstruction Association (Hunan gaizao cujin hui) welcomed Tan back in an open letter published in the *Dagong bao*. They expressed their hopes that the new governor and his people would "cleanse themselves of the air of soldiers, bureaucrats, and the gentry," carry out democratic reforms, promote mass education, and ensure freedom of speech and publication (Cheng, 1973: 80). And when Mao and his associates opened the Culture Bookshop that summer in order to distribute the abundant literature of the May Fourth movement, including the new Marxist literature, they invited Governor Tan to the ceremonies. He accepted the invitation and donated a signboard for the new store, written in his own hand (Ch'en, 1965: 72; Han, 1972: 88).

In September and October Mao was an enthusiastic and eloquent supporter of the liberal reformers' program of provincial autonomy. Under Tan, they hoped to separate Hunan from national war-lord politics, to declare it autonomous in order to restore its prosperity, modernize, and develop a constitutional government, regardless of what happened in the rest of China. Mao even went so far as to call for a Republic of Hunan, arguing that Hunanese had been oppressed by outsiders long enough. Hunan did not have to be a part of China. Small nations, too, could survive in the struggle for existence. He went on to argue that Chinese empires had oppressed not only the Hunanese, but also many minority nationalities within their boundaries, specifically, the Manchus, the Mongolians, the Hui (Chinese Moslems), and the Tibetans (Mao, 1920a: 100 (208); Mao, 1920b: 101 (209)).<sup>4</sup>

Mao and his associates, however, were not so enthusiastic about the way in which Hunan's new provincial constitution was being drafted. Along with Peng Huang, chairman of the Hunan Federation of Student Unions' Criticism and Discussion Section (Cheng, 1973: 75, 81), Long Jiangong, editor-in-chief of the *Dagong bao* and Kuang Rixiu, a leading academic, Mao drew up a petition protesting the elite nature of the drafting process — a petition signed by some 39 newspapermen, 212 educators, 9 members of the legal profession, and 115 miscellaneous persons. In this petition, printed in



the Dagong bao on October 4, 1920, they suggested that a "People's Constitutional Assembly" be made up of delegates from the various sectors of provincial society and that each organization should be entitled to one delegate for every five members. Groups sending delegates would include the Provincial Assembly, the Education Association, and organizations representing merchants, farmers, workers, students, teachers, journalists and the legal profession (Mao et al., 1920: 104-106 (212-214).

*A THEORETICAL MARXIST'S EFFORTS  
TO EDUCATE AND POLITICIZE*

At the same time that Mao was pressing for more liberal reforms, he was laying the foundations for a Marxist workers' movement. It was his view at the time that a workers' movement would be impossible unless the workers were politicized (Zhou, 1959: 102), and thus he turned once again to the mass education movement. In 1917, when he first had set up a night school for workers, he had been concerned principally with educating workers so that they would not be an obstacle to liberal reform programs. By 1920, after he had become a Marxist, the purpose had changed. Workers had to be educated so that they could pursue the interests of their own class.

Mao's renewed interest in mass education coincided with a national upsurge in such activities. The May Fourth movement had propounded the virtues of scientific knowledge, patriotism, and new democratic, social, and political ideas (Chow, 1967: 193; Hayford, 1973: 34), and this had a spillover effect with regard to mass literacy campaigns. In Hunan the May Fourth movement had spurred demands for "equal opportunity" with regard to education and the conviction on the part of some that political and economic inequalities were owing to inequalities of education. The "three lords" of China — the warlords, the finance lords, and the landlords — could exist, they thought, only because the common people did not have access to secondary or higher education (JBN, 1959: 434).

This enthusiasm generated by the May Fourth movement plus the return of Tan Yankai to power stimulated mass education projects once again. In July 1920 the Hunan Federation of Student Unions, with the support of some members of the Strengthen Learn-

ing Society, began setting up half-day schools to teach vernacular Chinese to the illiterate (JBN, 1959: 434). Mao started both a People's Night School (Pingmin yexiao) and a supplementary class (buxi ban) for unemployed youth, particularly the children of workers and peasants, at the Xiuye Primary School where he was the director. He used these classes not only to teach arithmetic, reading, and writing, but also to politicize the students. He encouraged the students to produce essays condemning customs of the old society, warlords, and imperialists, and he gathered information from them about the conditions of workers in Changsha (Zhou, 1959: 102).

The appointment of Mao's good friend and political ally He Shuheng to the newly created post of director of the Mass Education Office (Tongsu jiaoyu guan) of the Provincial Education Association also facilitated the effort to politicize workers. He's family background was similar to Mao's, but he was about ten years older and had obtained the first degree under the old examination system. When they had met, Mao had been a First Normal School student and He was already a teacher at the Chuyi Primary School.<sup>5</sup> The Mass Education Office, founded in 1920, was the successor to various popular education publication offices which had led a rather impoverished existence since 1912 (Hunan sheng zhengfu mishubu di wu ke, 1934: 558, 562).

As director of this office, He inherited the editorship of the Popular Education Journal (Tongsu jiaoyu bao). This journal had been in existence almost as long as the Republic, but in the opinion of the radicals who took it over in 1920, it had been an unpopular, little-read rehash of government pronouncements, stale news pilfered from other papers, and moralistic essays. He, Mao, and other members of the New People's Study Society resolved to turn the paper into "a weapon for mass education," featuring articles on such themes as "labor is sacred," women's liberation, the cultural revolution, and the unity of the masses. The paper was also rather outspoken against religious superstition, evil gentry, corrupt officials, and warlords (Zhou, 1959: 94-96).

At the same time that Mao and his friends sought to educate and politicize workers, they also set out to reeducate intellectuals. In August 1920, Mao, He Shuheng, and a former director of First Normal established a Russian Affairs Study Group. One of their projects was to organize a work study program in Russia, analo-

gous to the earlier work-study program in France. In September, Mao, He, and a number of others went on to form a Marxist Study Society (Ch'en, 1965: 72; Cheng, 1973: 81).

And in October, Mao received several copies of the constitution of the Socialist Youth Corps and began preparations for organizing a branch in Hunan (Li Rui, 1957: 146). This corps had been founded by Chen Duxiu in August in order to recruit young people into the Communist Party, which he was then in the process of organizing. It was originally open to those from fifteen to twenty-eight years of age (Harrison, 1972: 28).

*ZHAO HENGTI'S COUP DASHES THE HOPES  
OF THE DEMOCRATIC FORCES AND MAO'S  
FAITH IN THEIR METHODS*

This flurry of activity, both among workers and among intellectuals, seems to have been predicated on the assumption that democracy was going to work in Hunan. Relatively long-term solutions designed to educate and politicize seemed appropriate in this setting. Hunan's liberal reformers certainly were committed to modernization, and they had a history of tolerating radical intellectuals. Moreover they had, in 1920, given responsible positions in education to Mao and his friends. But if Mao did hold such notions, he soon was disabused of them. The patronage that Tan had offered his principal military supporter, Zhao Hengti, had been inadequate, and so in November 1920 Zhao took over the government in a coup and tossed out his ungrateful senior (McDonald, 1978: 36). Tan's return to power had lasted no more than four months.

Zhao Hengti, born in 1880, had been a member of the anti-dynastic, revolutionary, and republican coalition, the Tongmenghui, ever since its founding in Japan in 1905. During the Revolution of 1911 he had fought under Huang Xing, and after the revolution succeeded, Tan Yankai had asked him to join his government and reorganize the Hunan Army. In 1913 Zhao had been arrested for his participation in the anti-Yuan Second Revolution, but managed to get out of prison owing to his military connections with one of Yuan's supporters (Boorman, 1968: I, 143).

Even though Zhao was a Hunanese with revolutionary credentials, he was a militarist, and he was not to be forgiven for throwing out Tan Yankai and dashing the hopes of Hunan's reformers. Mao told

Edgar Snow in 1936, "When [Zhao Hengti] seized control he betrayed all the ideas he had supported, and especially he violently suppressed all demands for democracy" (Snow, 1968: 154). Zhao abolished the Preparatory Bureau for Drafting a Constitution set up by Tan and gave the job to the old Provincial Assembly (JBN, 1959: 430; Cheng, 1973: 81). In May 1921 he forced the removal of the radicals from the Provincial Education Association's Mass Education Office (Zhou, 1959: 94-96), and in July he attacked Hubei, and thus got Hunan involved in a losing war. To save his own position, Zhao was forced to make a deal with Wu Peifu, a northern warlord, and from this point on, Zhao was often identified as Wu Peifu's man (JBN, 1959: 430; Cheng, 1973: 81; Weekly Review of the Far East, Vol. 19 [December 17, 1921], and Vol. 21 [July 1, 1922]: 192). The tables had turned once more, and the governor of Hunan, albeit Hunanese, was back in the camp of a northern clique.

In the ten years from 1910 to 1920 there had been tremendous change in China. The dynasty had been overthrown. The republic had floundered in a sea of warlordism. And the May Fourth movement had swept the country. But the changes in Mao's own life were equally dramatic. In the summer of 1910 he had been a sixteen-year-old peasant lad with no modern education. In 1920 he was the twenty-six-year-old director of a prestigious primary school in the provincial capital. In 1910 he had a wife whom he had acquired in the traditional way, and whom he refused to recognize. In 1920 he was about to marry Yang Kaihui, a Beijing University student, the daughter of a nationally known professor, and a woman of his own choosing. In 1910 he had no political affiliations and no connections worth mentioning. In 1920 he was not only the prime mover behind the formation of a Marxist core group in Hunan, but also he was close to Yi Peiji, and Yi worked directly for Governor Tan (Cheng, 1973: 78; Siao-yu, 1961: 173). Through November 1920 Mao had played politics within the system, such as it was, and he had done remarkably well personally.

But the democratic ideals for which Mao had struggled and which the liberals were supposed to ensure had not been realized. Hunan's liberal reformers, no matter how well intentioned, simply could not compete with warlord power. Even though Tan Yankai, the Hanlin scholar, had resorted to arms in an effort to regain power, he was no match for the militarists. His own general had

turned him out. Mao became thoroughly disillusioned with the liberals, not so much with their ideals but with their capacities. Through November 1920 it appears that he had believed that they might be able to accomplish the goals of the democratic revolution and create the conditions under which the mass movements could grow. But Tan's third (or fourth, depending on how one counts) defeat in 1920 was the last straw. "From this time on I became more and more convinced that only mass political power, secured through mass action, could guarantee the realization of dynamic reforms. In the winter of 1920 I organized workers politically for the first time" (Snow, 1968: 155). Mao's contacts with that reformist elite would remain, but his faith in their ability to actually realize their goals was gone. For the next three years he devoted himself to building a Communist Party and organizing workers in Hunan.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> This incomplete list has been culled from the pages of the Chinese Economic Bulletin for the years 1921-25. In particular, see No. 55 (March 11, 1922) and No. 215 (April 4, 1925).

<sup>2</sup> During the Ming dynasty Hunan ranked fifteenth out of eighteen in the number of jinshi per million mean population. Its position declined during the early Qing to seventeenth out of eighteen. Hubei, Hunan, Sichuan, and Guangdong all suffered indirectly from "small early-Ming [juren] quotas, which were not revised in accordance with their growing population, and directly from the post-1702 provincial [jinshi] quotas." In addition, prior to 1702, these four provinces came under the "southern quota" and thus were directly competing with the culturally advanced southeastern provinces (Ho Ping-ti, 1964: 229-235).

<sup>3</sup> For further information regarding Mao's interest in women's issues, see Witke, 1961.

<sup>4</sup> This article, along with four others, is reprinted in Chinese in an article by Angus McDonald in Hōgaku konkyū. McDonald discovered these articles in a book of essays, Hunan zizhi yundong shi (shang) [The History of the Self-government Movement in Hunan, Pt. 1], edited by a Fujianese journalist, Wang Wuwei. The book was published in December 1920 in Shanghai.

<sup>5</sup> This biographical information on He Shuheng comes from Siao-yu, 1961: 64-65, 95-103; Klein and Clark, 1971: Vol. II, 73-75; Li Rui, 1957: 68-69; and Zhou, 1959: 93-94.

## The Beginnings of the Labor Movement

Mao Zedong told Edgar Snow that he began to organize workers "politically" in the winter of 1920, that is around December 1920, and there are a few pieces of documentary evidence that confirm a shift in his attitude toward the political role of workers and the function of mass education at this time. Before Mao became a Marxist, he had been involved in workers' literacy campaigns, which he then saw as a long-range solution to China's problems. A literate citizenry that supported reform, not reaction, would strengthen the nation and would be an asset to any democratic government. After he became a Marxist in early 1920 but before his hopes for a liberal administration in Hunan were dashed, Mao saw the literacy campaigns as a way to politicize workers so that some day they would be prepared to lead the revolution, but he was still thinking in long-range terms. In the meantime, he continued to hope that the liberal reformers could stay in power and create a climate favorable to the maturation of the Chinese working class or, at least, the Hunanese working class. But by November 1920, in the wake of Tan Yankai's third (or fourth, depending on how one counts) defeat, Mao abandoned his hope that the national democratic forces would ever be able to implement their programs, and he put his faith instead in mass organizations. The mass education movement was no longer a part of a solution, a way out; it had become simply a means to an end, a way into the midst of the workers, an acceptable cover for a unionization campaign and the propagation of Marxism. Class-conscious unions were now a priority. In November 1920 Mao exhorted young socialists to go into the factories (Li Rui, 1957: 148). And in December he published an article in a Changsha newspaper that called for "workers' liberation." He argued that workers would never be able to raise their position in society or improve their living standards unless they themselves raised their consciousness and

formed strong organizations. They could not rely on the good will of their employers or appeals for morality and justice; nor could they expect anyone else to look out for their interests (Li Rui, 1957: 161-162). Clearly Mao was ready to devote his energies to the labor movement.

#### *ANARCHISM AND THE LABOR MOVEMENT*

And yet, there is no record of Mao organizing a Communist-led union for at least one year. In the Peoples' Republic sources, which are usually the most complete, none of the Communist unions formed in 1922 traces its origins back to 1920 or 1921, even though there is some evidence from other sources that at least one of these unions, that of the printers, a union with which Mao had close ties, does date back to late 1920 (see Chapter 6). The most plausible explanation for this gap in the record is that Mao organized workers under auspices other than Communist, that he worked for an anarchist-led workers' organization founded in November 1920, and that historians of Mao and Hunanese labor in China have been reticent to say so. In fact, when the record of Mao's activities does pick up again, he is with the anarchists, trying to remold both their loose organization and their ideological orientation, and going with them to visit the Anyuan coal mines.

Actually, it is not surprising that Hunan's labor movement began under anarchist auspices, a fact which Chinese historians, including the Communists, have made no effort to hide (Guo Liang, 1958: 43). (It is only Mao's relationship to the anarchist organization that seems problematic.) Throughout the first two decades of this century, anarchism was in China "the predominant radical expression of the Westernized intellectual" (Scalapino and Yu, 1961: 1). Before the Russian Revolution, Marxism was understood to be a remedy for the evils of industrial capitalism and seemed to have little to say to revolutionaries in preindustrial countries. Anarchism, on the other hand, had a widespread impact on many revolutionaries in developing countries. The Russians, in particular, took it to heart, and Japanese intellectuals quickly became enamored with Tolstoy, Bakunin, and Kropotkin. When Chinese exiles and students began arriving in Japan after 1895, they too were influenced by anarchist ideals and revolutionary strategies. And Hunanese were no exception to this rule (Bernal, 1968: 119-121, 136-137).

Like Marxists, many anarchists in China opposed private owner-

ship of the means of production and advocated what amounted to a classless society, but they also opposed the existence of any coercive power, most especially the state. In the projected anarchist society, people would return to a self-regulating, natural condition, carrying on social and economic activities through spontaneous cooperation and barter, just as they had done before the imposition of the state. Any sort of government or even a disciplined organization was seen as coercive, and currencies and legal systems were also on the list of evils to be abolished (Zhou, 1959: 88-89; "The Manifesto of the Association of Anarchists, Hunan Section," n.d., n.p.).

Since anarchists believed that revolutions were spontaneous acts, they absolved themselves from the duty of organizing or planning a revolution. But they did believe that a revolutionary climate could be created both by peaceful propaganda and through "propaganda by deed," that is, acts of terrorism, often the assassination of government officials. And some anarchists did concede the usefulness of mass organizations, providing that they were not coercive institutions. In particular, those who were anarcho-syndicalists advocated workers' associations which eventually would precipitate a spontaneous general strike. The general strike would terrorize the government and the capitalists and bring an end to the state ("A Manifesto of the Association of Anarchists, Hunan Section," n.d., n.p.).

The influence that anarchism and anarchists had on China's workers is difficult to measure, but it appears to have been significant, especially in the Guangzhou area where the modern labor movement began. Western traders had been confined to this southeastern port from the late eighteenth century, when they first began arriving in significant numbers, until 1842, when Guangzhou's monopoly was broken as a result of the First Opium War. Thus, this area was the first to feel the impact of the West, both in its positive and its negative aspects, and relations between Guangzhou Chinese and Westerners were often strained.

From its earliest beginnings, the Guangzhou workers' movement was embroiled in politics, particularly in the politics of confrontation with the West and the Western-born industrial revolution. At first the workers had acted as foot soldiers for the antiforeign gentry and secret societies, but after 1895 there was a new alternative: collaboration with the anti-Manchu republican revolutionaries, men who were often inspired by anarchist ideas. Although unskilled



workers still tended to belong to secret society networks, skilled workers often joined local branches of the Tongmenghui, an anti-Manchu revolutionary alliance organized in Japan in 1905. Mechanics, in particular, were active in the China Assassination Corps, which had been organized by members of the Tongmen hui. They manufactured arms and bombs for the revolutionaries and even delivered them to their targets (Chan, 1975: 33-38).

After the Revolution of 1911 and throughout the 1910s, especially in the Guangzhou area, anarcho-syndicalists continued to be the political faction most active in the labor movement (Chan, 1975: 39, 244). But they do not seem to have organized overtly anarchist labor associations. From 1895 to 1920, the period of anarchist ascendancy, transitional forms of labor organization prevailed. These associations included both employers and employees and had purely nationalistic goals: to develop the industrial sector of the economy and to improve China's competitive position vis-à-vis the foreigners. In order to realize these goals, they promoted better living and working conditions for labor and the spread of technical skills among the workers.

Nevertheless, it was while the labor movement was under anarchist influence, before Marxism even had been introduced to China's workers, that the first class-delineated modern union appeared. It grew out of a split within the China Institute for the Study of Mechanics, which had been founded in 1909. Unlike most of the patriotic transitional organizations, there were very few employers in this institute, simply because most employers of mechanics were foreigners. Furthermore, the main impetus behind its formation had been the workers' grievances against foreign employers and supervisors, and so, even in its origins, this association was somewhat different.

There were a few Chinese proprietors of small workshops who did belong to the institute, but they do not seem to have been comfortable in this organization, which they, no doubt, would have had some difficulty in dominating. In fact, it was they who split off from the workers and formed their own organization, and not the other way around. The employees, abandoned, then formed their own organization, the Mechanics' Union, in 1919, which thus became the first exclusively worker, class-delineated union in China (Chan, 1975: 167-168).

In Hunan, too, the mechanics led the way. In November 1920 they established the Mechanics' Union, probably the first such class-

delineated organization in the province (Chesneaux 1968: 167). Most of its members were students in the trade schools, but it also included some workers and apprentices ("Shengxian xia zhi Hunan," 1923: 75-76). It seems to have inherited from its Guangzhou predecessor the notion that a union should not include employers, for no sooner had it formed than its members got involved in an argument with another newly founded Hunanese labor organization over which one truly represented workers, and not employers (Chesneaux, 1968: 167).

#### *THE HUNAN LABOR ASSOCIATION*

Their rival, founded on November 21, 1920, was the Hunan Labor Association, and it was to be politically a much more significant organization. The impact that the Mechanics' Union could have was limited by the number of mechanics, whereas the Hunan Labor Association was open to all urban labor. In fact, one Hunanese Communist organizer went so far as to call it "the beginning of the Hunan workers' movement" (Guo Liang, 1958: 43), and it was this organization with which Mao was closely associated. Although organized and led by anarchists, and used to recruit them, the association itself did not have an overtly anarchist program. Its purposes were three: (1) to protect the interest of the workers; (2) to promote national unity; and (3) to promote the dignity of the race (Ma, 1958: Vol. I, Pt. 1, 152). And it defined the interests of the workers as "reforming the material livelihood and raising the intellectual level of labor" (Li Rui, 1957: 173). Members were organized into three-man cells, which were not grouped together either by trade or industry. In theory, these cells simply formed one large association.

Huang Ai and Pang Renquan are the two best known among this group. Huang, who is described as the more organizationally talented, is credited with most of the work that went into recruiting the working class membership of the association (Ma, 1958: Vol. I, Pt. 1, 152). He was originally from Changde, Hunan, but had studied in Tianjin, a North China treaty port. During the May Fourth movement he became an anarchist and was so active in movement activities there that he was jailed twice. In early 1920 he returned to Hunan (JBN, 1959: 418).

Pang Renquan was from a village in Xiantan xian, little more than ten miles from Mao's home. Pang, also recruited to anarchism

during the May Fourth movement, had not studied outside Hunan and had been active in the anti-Zhang Jingyao campaign along with Mao (Li Rui, 1957: 175; JBN, 1959: 418). Described as the more polemical and theoretical of the two leaders, he was the editor of the Hunan Labor Association's publication, the Labor Weekly (Laogong zhoukan) (Chesneaux, 1965: 292). An avid reader of both Sun Yat-sen and a variety of Western socialist thinkers, his articles were devoted to "enabling the workers to understand their own position, their own suffering, and furthermore, to realizing how they should choose freedom, seek their own happiness, and protect their own interests" (Ma, 1958: Vol. I, Pt. 1, 152-153).

Both Huang and Pang were students at the Class A Industrial School (Shengzhong gongye xuexiao) which had been established by the local government to produce foremen and inspectors for factories (Shen, 1923: 340). They recruited anarchist organizers from their own school as well as from two other Changsha trade schools, the Chuyi Industrial School (Chuyi gongye xuexiao) and the No. 1 Vocational School (Diyi zhiye xuexiao) (JBN, 1959: 419). Once this core group formed, they planned to use their positions in the factories to gain the confidence of the workers (Shen, 1923: 340).

Although the early members of the association were almost all students, they gradually acquired a following among the workers at the spinning mill, the government mint, and the lead-smelting plant, and among certain crafts, the construction workers, the tailors, and the barbers, in particular. By January 1922 the association had 3,000 members and included workers at the Guang Hua Electric Company, the arsenal, and the lead and zinc mines at Shuikoushan, and railroad employees on all lines in Hunan, including the section between Zhuzhou and the coal mines in Anyuan, Jiangxi. Among the Changsha trades, they had recruited machinists, mold casters, surveyors, electricians, printers, spinners, weavers, machine weavers, dyers, carters, writing-implement makers, embroidery workers, longshoremen, and Xiang River boatmen (Ma, 1958: Vol. I, Pt. 1, 152; JBN, 1959: 418-419; Li Rui, 1957: 173).

This Hunan Labor Association had no sooner formed in November 1920 than it made itself unpopular with the new warlord governor, Zhao Hengti. They were among the protesters that accused Zhao of prematurely cutting off the debate over how the provincial constitution should be drafted. They claimed that he used undemocratic means to draft and promulgate the document, and they doubted his

commitment to constitutional government (JBN, 1959: 427-428). Their publications alleged that Zhao was merely using the constitution as a screen to hide his plans for a long-term military occupation of Hunan (Ma, 1958: Vol. I, Pt. 1, 196).

No sooner had the constitutional issue died down than the association became embroiled in yet another anti-Zhao campaign involving the Hua Shi Spinning Company. The plant had originally been the Hunanese No. 1 Spinning Mill, a joint official-merchant (guanshang heban) undertaking established in 1913. The mill, however, was never able to begin operating under these auspices owing to incessant civil war and a shortage of operating capital. Tan Yankai, therefore, during his second rule as provincial governor (1916-17), had leased the plant to a private company, the Hua Shi Spinning Company, which operated the plant from August 1917 until March 1918. Tan Yankai, however, had been forced out, and Zhang Jingyao, who eventually replaced him, did not renew the lease. He made an attempt to sell the mill, but was prevented from doing so by local opposition. In July 1920, when Tan Yankai returned as provincial governor for the third time (or fourth time, depending on how one counts), he leased the plant once again to the Hua Shi Spinning Company for fifteen years. And because the factory was suffering from neglect, he agreed to install new machinery and repair the plant. In return the company was supposed to pay an annual rent of 10,000 yuan to the provincial government (JBN, 1959: 419).

After Tan Yankai was ousted by Zhao Hengti, however, the Hua Shi Spinning Company, short on capital, decided to sublease the plant to an outsider, a man from Jiangsu named Zhao Zian, and he began bringing in managers, technicians, and workers from Shanghai and Hankou to run the factory (CEB No. 64, 1922: 9; JBN, 1959: 419; Li Rui, 1957: 174). The news that the factory was to be handed over to outsiders prompted an immediate reaction on the part of the Hunan Labor Association. They began to attack the provincial government for leasing public property to a private company. The public property of "30,000,000 Hunanese" had been turned over to private interests by "corrupt officials" who had "sacrificed the interests of the Hunanese people." The association insisted that the mill be returned to public ownership and began to organize the plant's employees behind these demands as well as a demand for a wage increase (Ma, 1958: I, 196; Li Rui, 1957: 174).

The association was soon joined by other protesters. Both the

teachers and the students at local trade schools resented the influx of outsiders and thus added their voices to the anti-Zhao clamor. Local businessmen, too, especially cotton dealers, suggested that a new Hunanese consortium be mobilized to take over the plant. They had never appreciated the Hua Shi Company's monopoly in the Hunan market and were hoping to gain a share in the mill's management for themselves (JBN, 1959: 419).

Zhao Hengti, however, could not be moved. He made no concessions. On the contrary, he guaranteed the Hua Shi Spinning Company's lease. A rumor then started that the company had bribed him with a 50,000 yuan gift of its stock. And in February 1921 the company officially took over the plant. But this did not stop the protests.

The Hunan Labor Association stepped up its campaign against both the company and Zhao Hengti. Its leaflets, which local businessmen helped it compose, proclaimed the crimes of the company. These included its monopoly position in the cotton market and a claim that the Hunanese government was not getting a fair return on its investment. The capital, which had originally come from the Hunanese business community (in 1913), was being replaced by that of outsiders. Outside capital was not supposed to exceed 5 percent, but with the coming of Zhao Zian, it had reached 50 percent. Furthermore, the expertise of the Hunanese workers had been called into question. They were certainly capable of running the machines, which were very similar to those at the electric company, at the arsenal, and at other Changsha factories. Hiring people from outside would contribute to unemployment. High management positions were being taken over by outsiders as well. And for good measure, they listed among the company's crimes that it refused to hire women (JBN, 1959: 421-422).

A heated dispute developed between the Hunanese businessmen and the Hunan Labor Association on the one side, and Zhao Hengti and the Hua Shi Spinning Company on the other. In March 1921 the association petitioned the provincial assembly, and for unspecified reasons, both Huang Ai and Pang Renquan went to jail for over a month. While they were in jail, most of the outstanding issues were negotiated among Zhao Hengti, the company, and the "gentry and business allies" of the association. Although a description of the complete compromise is not available, its major features are clear. The Hua Shi Company would keep its lease, but the outsiders had to leave (CEB No. 64: 1922, 9).

After the issue had been settled, Zhao Hengti let Huang and Pang out of jail. They were sorely disillusioned and felt that they had been used by the local business community. At a meeting held to celebrate their release, they proclaimed that businessmen were no different from warlords: they had "become one and the same." Furthermore, the warlords and businessmen shored up the rule of the traditional local gentry (JBN, 1959: 423-424). In their minds there were no longer any progressive employers in Hunan. In the spring of 1921 they were ripe for recruitment by the Marxists.

And, in fact, Mao was trying to recruit them. That Mao worked with the Hunan Labor Association is not to say that he was an anarchist. Quite clearly he was not. Even before the Marxist Study Group formed in September 1920, Mao had organized an "Exalt the New Study Society" at First Normal School, and its main purpose had been "to study Marxism and oppose anarchism" (Zhou, 1959: 99). This was not going to be an easy task. First of all, anarchists were so numerous. Mao complained that when he started to propagate Marxism in 1920 he had "run head on into anarchists in all directions" (Zhou, 1959: 88). And second, anarchists were quite hostile to Marxists. In Europe, there had been a long history of antagonism between the two. From the anarchist point of view Marxists believed in at least the short-term efficacy of a workers' state, a coercive dictatorship of the proletariat. Even though the ultimate goal of the Marxists might be the withering away of the state, their acceptance of it as an interim measure would necessarily subvert the very purpose of revolution. Furthermore, the Marxist parties themselves were coercive and thus could not further the liberation of mankind ("A Manifesto of the Association of Anarchists, Hunan Section," n.d., n.p.; Li Rui, 1957: 174).

If Mao was going to build a Marxist party and a Communist labor movement, he had no choice but to deal with the anarchists in one way or another. It appears that he followed a dual path. First he set up an ideologically pure Marxist organization, the Socialist Youth Corps, and then he joined the Hunan Labor Association and worked with them in an effort to recruit their best organizers and some of their membership into the Socialist Youth Corps. And from what little information there is, it appears that a significant part of his work with the anarchists would be more accurately characterized as running alongside "gesticulating and criticizing" than as helping (Mao, 1965: Vol. I, 24).

*THE BEGINNINGS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY*

Preparations to set up a Socialist Youth Corps in Hunan date back to October 1920 when Mao received several copies of its constitution in the mail (Li Rui, 1957: 146). He was actively recruiting in November when Tan Yankai was ousted (Li Rui, 1957: 148), and in December the Hunan branch of the corps was officially founded. Most of its charter members came from the New Peoples' Study Society, whose membership already overlapped with that of the Marxist Study Society. In January 1921 those members of the New Peoples' Study Society whose commitment to the organization was lacking (or who possibly had not kept up with the changing ideological winds) were expelled (Li Rui, 1957: 147). Thereafter, the society withered away. When one of the few people in the society who did not become a socialist returned to Changsha in 1921, he "had the impression that [he] had been invited to attend its funeral service" (Siao-yu, 1961: 188).

At about the same time, Mao turned his attention to converting anarchists to Marxism, both workers and students. It appears that he concentrated his efforts on Huang Ai and Pang Renquan and on the workers they had organized into a Workers' Reading Society (Gongren dushu hui). In order to facilitate this recruiting, Mao set up in the spring of 1921 a Sunday Recreation Society which sponsored expeditions to various picnic sites around Changsha, where political discussions could be held in a relatively unsuspecting setting (Zhou, 1959: 99).

Mao was forced to call a temporary halt to this anarchist recruiting, however, in the late spring or early summer of 1921, in order to go to Shanghai for the official founding of the Chinese Communist Party. In July, about a dozen people, representing a total membership of fifty-seven, assembled in Shanghai's French Concession to hold the Party's First National Congress (Schram, 1967: 62-63; Harrison, 1972: 19-31). Neither Li Dazhao nor Chen Duxiu, the mentors of the movement, were there, but Chen had sent a draft program.

This draft program was highly orthodox from a classical Marxist point of view. Aside from the comment that "the seizure of state power . . . was a problem for the future" (Wilbur and How, 1956: 53), it made no concessions to China's largely preindustrial condition. There was no elucidation of stage theory or the necessity of a national democratic revolution, primary issues of the Comintern's

Second Congress in 1920. The First Congress of the Chinese Party simply declared that its goals were the overthrow of the capitalist class, the confiscation of all means of production, and the formation of a dictatorship of the proletariat. The First Decision as to the Object of the Communist Party of China, 1921, began: "To form industrial unions is the chief aim of our party" (Ch'en Kung-po, 1966: 103).

Because the Party organization was clandestine, these founders of the Party established an open, public organization to fill the need for coordination and direction of the labor movement, namely, the Chinese Labor Organizations Secretariat (Zhongguo laodong zuhe shujibu), which is usually referred to in English as the Labor Secretariat (Chesneaux, 1968: 178). Its main office was first located in Shanghai but was moved to Beijing in May 1922. There were five branches in 1921 — in Shanghai, Wuhan, Guangzhou, Jinan, and Changsha — each with a branch secretary (Deng Zhongxia, 1949: 38).

The major aim of the secretariat at its outset was to organize and obtain legal recognition for unions (Deng Zhongxia, 1949: 38) and to "imbue these unions with the spirit of class struggle." And although the First Congress forbade Party members to join or have any relationship with other parties (thus earning the epithet "isolationist"), it nevertheless instructed members of the Labor Secretariat to join and work with unions which did not agree with the Communist program and with the existing guilds and technical unions (Ch'en Kung-po, 1966: 103-105). Thus Mao's work with the anarchists was not out of line with the decisions made at this First Congress.

Mao returned to Changsha as both the secretary of the Hunan Labor Secretariat and the Hunan branch of the Chinese Communist Party. But there is no indication even after the secretariat was set up that Mao began to organize workers apart from the Hunan Labor Association. And a great deal of his energy must have gone into the founding of a new school, Self-Education University. The ostensible purposes of this school were to "discover truth, create men of ability, and spread culture throughout the common people" (Li Rui, 1957: 154), but it seems to have afforded Mao another opportunity to propagate Marxism. Aside from foreign languages and literature, its main course of study was political economy (Li Rui, 1957: 155). There were regular seminars on Marxism-Leninism, and in 1922, under the school's name, Mao published a



Marxist theoretical journal, The New Age (Xin shidai) (JBN, 1959: 432-433).

Both the funds and the facilities for Self-Education University were provided by what might appear to be a somewhat unlikely source, the Chuanshan Academy. The academy had been founded in 1914 in order to study and promote the works of Wang Fuzhi (whose other name was Wang Chuanshan) a seventeenth century Ming loyalist philosopher (HHXL, 1965: 586). Because of Wang's anti-Manchu posture his works had not received much attention until the nineteenth century, when the Hunanese protectors of the Chinese essence stimulated new interest in his work. The academy sponsored lectures and published a journal, Chuanshan Studies (Chuanshan xuebao). Written in classical Chinese, it published articles by traditional men of letters and famous scholars in Hunan (Li Rui, 1957: 30).

But the academy was not as traditional as it might appear. One of its founders had been Liu Renxi, a teacher of the martyred 1898 reformer, Tan Sitong (HHXL, 1965: 586). Although many of the members were Confucian scholars, some belonged to liberal or even radical factions of the Hunanese elite. At least one of the members of the board of directors was close to Tan Yankai, and that may explain why the academy was willing to make He Shuheng (Mao's good friend who had accompanied him to Shanghai for the Party's founding) its director in the summer of 1921. Under Tan Yankai, He had been appointed director of the Mass Education Office of the Provincial Educational Association, but in May 1921 Zhao Hengti had dismissed him and his associates from that office for extremism (Zhou, 1959: 94-96). Making He director of the Chuanshan Academy was one way to get back at Zhao. Furthermore, He was from Ningxiang xian, and Ningxiang liberals were an important group within the academy's membership (McDonald, 1978: 117-118), and He was said to be on good terms with the academy's director. The membership in general was patriotic and distraught over the condition of the Republic and appears to have raised no objection to He's appointment. As a result, He was able to become director and to control the academy's funds. And he offered its facilities to Self-Education University along with a 400-yuan monthly subsidy (Li Rui, 1957: 30, 154).

Self-Education University remained a small but intensive operation. In 1923 it had only twenty-four students, who engaged almost exclusively in independent research and group discussions. The

university was designed to attract those students who were unhappy with contemporary schools, or who did not have the financial means to attend another university. There was no tuition, and students who lived there paid only for their meals. Applicants did not have to meet rigid entrance requirements, but they did have to demonstrate their abilities and their political ideals on an entrance examination that asked them to explain their philosophy of life and to give a critique of society. If they passed that examination, they then were interviewed and, perhaps, admitted (Li Rui, 1957: 155).

*ZHAO HENGTI THWARTS MAO'S PLAN  
TO REFORM THE HUNAN LABOR  
ASSOCIATION*

In the midst of all this educational activity Mao, upon his return, continued his efforts to turn talented anarchist labor organizers into Marxists. And after the founding of the secretariat he finally did persuade both Huang and Pang (as well as some of the other anarchist students at First Normal School) to join the Socialist Youth Corps. The students called this tendency "the convergence of anarchism and Marxism" (an-Ma heliu) (Zhou, 1959: 99).

In September 1921 Huang Ai and Pang Renquan were among five people who went with Mao to Anyuan, Jiangxi, on a different sort of expedition. For a week, pretending to be interested tourists, the group visited the Pingxiang Colliery and even went down into the shafts (Li Rui, 1957: 179). In November 1921, Pang Renquan invited Mao to write an article for the anarchist publication, Labor Weekly (Laogong zhoukan). Entitled "Our Hopes for the Hunan Labor Association," Mao's article suggested that the association should not confine itself to economic struggles, but should also increase the class consciousness of the workers. The article also recommended a strong internal organization, something which the anarchists had avoided, with administrative organs having full powers. He further pointed out the usefulness of dues and strike funds (Li Rui, 1957: 179). Mao is also reported to have criticized the anarchists, although probably not in public, for their "fantasies" about using terrorism to bring down the government (JBN, 1959: 425).

Also in the latter part of 1921, probably at about the same time that Mao was writing "Our Hopes" for the Hunan Labor Association, the association was being reorganized along the lines suggested in

Mao's article. It was to have a fully empowered secretariat, a propaganda section, and an organizations section. The three-man cell system was to be abolished in favor of unions organized around trades or industries. Cells among construction workers, machinists, and printers were in the process of reorganizing (JBN, 1959: 425). The "convergence of anarchism and Marxism" was proceeding a step further.

Further evidence of Communist influence on the Hunan Labor Association was its participation in a Communist-inspired political campaign against the Washington Conference. Invitations to this Conference which proposed to settle a large number of issues left over after the Versailles Treaty, many of which concerned East Asia, went out to all those countries involved, except the Soviet Union. They were offended that they had not been included and worried that their interests would not be considered. The Chinese, on the other hand, were hoping for a favorable resolution of the issue of Japanese concessions in Shandong, and some progress on the issues of regaining tariff autonomy and ending extraterritoriality. The local anarchist paper, the Labor Weekly, published articles denouncing the conference and attacking militarism and imperialism (Tso, 1928: 80). This campaign, primarily directed against England and Japan, culminated in a large demonstration. Some claim 10,000 people were there, expressing "their serious opposition to the continued imperialist aggression in China" (Ma, 1958: I, Pt. 1, 173). The combination of this rather visible campaign with the reorganization of the association has led some authors to confuse November 1921 with November 1920 as the founding date of the association (for example, Yuan Fuqing, 1951: 9).

It appears that Mao's efforts to hijack a significant portion of this anarchist organization were about to succeed. The 3,000 members of the association were forming unions, organization was being imposed, and at least two of the association's leaders were members of the Socialist Youth Corps. But that was not to be. In January 1922, once again, the warlord Zhao Hengti, destroyed Mao's plans.

The end of the Hunan Labor Association came about as a result of another confrontation between Huang Ai and Pang Renquan, on the one hand, and Zhao Hengti and the Hua Shi Spinning Company, on the other. On January 13, 1922, as the Chinese New Year approached, the workers at Hua Shi asked for a bonus equal to one month's wages (Ma, 1958: I, Pt. 1, 196; JBN, 1959: 439). The New Year's bonus was customary in China, for everyone was supposed

to pay all their bills and, if possible, purchase new clothes, to start the New Year properly. This practice was still widespread in the early twenties, especially in the spinning mills of Shanghai (Chesneaux, 1968: 91), which the Changsha spinners pointed out to the Hua Shi Company (JBN, 1959: 439).

The company replied, in essence, that Changsha was not Shanghai and that there was no reason to take Shanghai as a model (JBN, 1959: 439). Furthermore, they argued, they had only been operating since March, and thus there had been no profits to speak of, and thus there could be no bonus (Chen Da, 1927: 181).

The workers disputed this. The factory's 4,000 spindles had been operating day and night for 10 months (CEB No. 64, 1922: 9). Convinced that the company had indeed made money, they went on strike that afternoon (JBN, 1959: 430). Not content merely to walk out, they destroyed some of the machinery on the way (Chen Da, 1927: 181). Armed company police then arrived and attacked the workers, beating them back. Some of the workers then managed to seize the police rifles, and fighting ensued between the two sides. Several of the company police were injured (JBN, 1959: 439-440), three workers were killed, and two were seriously injured ("News from Central China," The Weekly Review of the Far East Vol. 19 [February 4, 1922]: 444).

When the fight ended the workers regrouped and drew up a set of demands. They wanted the bonus, but they also wanted their wages to be paid in silver (to protect themselves from the further depreciation of paper and copper currencies), paid holidays, protection from arbitrary dismissal, and medical expenses for the workers injured in the fight (JBN, 1959: 439-440).

On January 14, Zhao Hengti sent a battalion of troops to the scene. After surrounding the hill where the mill was located, he announced, "The workers in this strike have destroyed machinery and injured the patrols. Thus this strike is an antigovernment act" (JBN, 1959: 440). The soldiers occupied the factory and the dormitories, training machine guns on the buildings. In the process of the military takeover, several workers were arrested, and a number were tied up and beaten. Changsha was put under martial law, and the workers were imprisoned in their dormitories (Ma, 1958: I, Pt. 1, 196-197).

On the next day, the fifteenth, the workers managed to smuggle out a public announcement, a plea for help — "The Emergency Report of All 2,200 Workers at the Spinning Mill." Among the groups

that responded, the most visible was the Hunan Labor Association. It immediately came out with an anti-Zhao statement, demanding that all the troops be withdrawn from the area (JBN, 1959: 440; Ma, 1958: I, Pt. 1, 196).

Negotiations, nevertheless, were proceeding, and the workers won their point. The management promised them a bonus of 20 yuan each and granted a paid vacation from January 16 through February 4 (Lin Wei, 1932: 54). Exactly what happened after this agreement was reached on the sixteenth is not clear. One source suggests that although the workers were satisfied with the above settlement, they then changed their mind and rejected it. Thus the government suspected that someone was behind their quick change of mind and decided that it was Huang and Pang (Chen Da, 1927: 181; "News from Central China," The Weekly Review of the Far East Vol. 19 [February 11] 1922: 480). Other sources say that the company suspected all along that Huang and Pang were the cause of it all and bribed Zhao Hengti to execute them (Ma, 1958: I, Pt. 1, 197; JBN, 1959: 440; Lin Wei, 1932: 54; Shen, 1923: 341). The latter sources make no mention of any change of mind on the workers' part with regard to the settlement.

Whichever way it was, on the night of January 16, Zhao Hengti arrested and interrogated Huang Ai and Pang Renquan. On the morning of the seventeenth they were executed outside the Liuyang Gate (JBN, 1959: 440). Zhao Hengti announced the deed on the same day and provided a list of their crimes.

Huang Ai and Pang Renquan propagated anarchism using the name of the Hunan Labor Association. They inflamed the minds of the workers. They have been buying arms and are in league with bandits, preparing to take advantage of a hard winter to foment rebellion and disturb the peace (JBN, 1959: 440; Ch'en Ta; 1922: 181).

Zhao then proceeded to close down completely the Hunan Labor Association and its magazine, the Labor Weekly. Some members of the association fled the province to form the Shanghai-based Hunan Labor Association (JBN, 1959: 440; Chesneaux, 1968: 292), but the Hunan organization never recovered.

Not only in Changsha, but in all of China, the liberal community was shocked by the news that Zhao Hengti had beheaded two students. Cai Yuanpei, chancellor of Beijing University, sent a telegram to Changsha expressing his opposition to Zhao (Ma, 1958: I, Pt. 1, 197). And Zhao felt obliged to deny that the company had

bribed him with more stock. What he had done, he said, was necessary "for keeping peace and order in Changsha," and was of no private benefit to him ("News from Central China," The Weekly Review of the Far East Vol. 20 [April 29] 1922: 355).

In Changsha, there was vigorous protest from all quarters. A delegation was organized, including Huang Ai's father, to go to Guangzhou to "redress the injustice." Once in Guangzhou, they petitioned Sun Yat-sen, "and he ended the matter by issuing an order that Zhao should be punished" (Ma, 1958: I, Pt. 1, 197). Sun Yat-sen, titular president of the Chinese government in Guangzhou from September 1920 to June 1922 (Harrison, 1972: 29), was encamped at that moment in Guilin, Guangxi, not far from the Hunanese border. For some time Sun had been advocating a northern expedition to unify the country. The first step would have involved an attack on Hunan (Clubb, 1965: 104), and it is quite possible that the Hunanese protesters hoped to employ the services of Sun Yat-sen to drive out Zhao, just as Zhang Jingyao's opposition had used Tan Yankai. What had worked in 1920 did not work in 1922. Sun Yat-sen's position in the south was not secure, and his ally, the militarist Chen Jiongming, was not interested in any punitive expedition, especially not with Sun Yat-sen at its head.

After the execution of his two friends, and the destruction of the Hunan Labor Association, Mao had to revise his plans. It appears that he moved carefully to pick up the pieces and gradually re-assemble that membership into unions that then joined together to form the Hunan Federation of Labor Organizations in November 1922. And thereafter, whenever possible, he pursued the unionization campaign under liberal-democratic covers, in particular, the mass education movement and the provincial constitution. He no doubt feared that if he became isolated from his long-time political allies he might suffer the same fate as Huang Ai and Pang Renquan.

#### *THE MASS EDUCATION MOVEMENT BECOMES A COVER FOR ORGANIZING*

Fortuitously, from the point of view of the Communist labor movement, there was new energy and new money behind the mass education movement in the spring of 1922. In the fall of 1921 the Strengthen Education Society had felt an urgent need for more mass education. The new provincial constitution would go into effect in January 1922, and in their minds the disparity between democratic

forms and illiterate citizens constituted a crisis. But they had big dreams and few means (JBN, 1959: 434), and little was accomplished. But this nagging problem of funds was solved in 1922 with, as some writers have called it, "imperialist money" (JBN, 1959: 434). The Chinese Young Men's Christian Association joined the mass education movement in Changsha. The prime mover behind this YMCA campaign was James Y. C. Yen, the son of an illustrious family of scholars in Sichuan (Brockman, 1924: 1). He had begun his education in the classical way, but like many others, he switched to Western-style schools once it became clear that traditional education was not the wave of the future. Eventually he went overseas to study, and during World War I he was a student at Yale University (Lenz, n.d.: 2).

While Yen was at Yale, the YMCA was organizing a program for Chinese workers in France. Owing to labor shortages during the war, Chinese workers were posted to France, and from 1916 on there were nearly 200,000 of them. But they were not happy. Discontent led to riots, strikes, and in one case, fighting between Chinese workers and French soldiers. Finally, the Allies asked the YMCA for help. It was supposed to organize wholesome recreation and combat gambling and narcotics use (Chesneaux, 1968: 138-140). And the YMCA recruited James Yen for the program.

When Yen arrived in France and began this work, he took it quite seriously, and his experience with the workers made quite an impression on him. He was struck not only by their lack of education, but also by their abilities and their potential. He decided "that instead of just amusing them, [he] was going to educate them" (Brockman, 1924: 2). When Yen returned to China after the war he wanted to continue this work, and he "commenced talking about the real Chinese citizen as being not a scholar or an official or a gentry-man, but a humble laborer or farmer" (Hall, "Reminiscences," YMCA HL, X951).

The YMCA agreed to support Yen's plans and for a wide variety of reasons chose Changsha to be the site of the pilot project. To some, its previous exclusiveness and its "Chineseness" were the primary appeal. "Changsha is in the interior; it is old, conservative and slow moving. It is in the throes of the first anti-Christian agitation" (Sweet, 1927: 54). To others its progressive reputation was the appeal. "It was more literate than most cities. It had the reputation of being hospitable to liberal, even radical innovations. The YMCA was strong. And

there was a mission college [Yale in China] in which students were interested in social service" (Hall, 1942: YMCA HL, X970.4).

In 1921 James Yen went to Changsha to discuss the program with the local YMCA personnel, and in 1922 the campaign got underway when the local YMCA Secretary, Lawrence K. Hall, called a meeting of all local notables — businessmen, school presidents, editors, officials, guild leaders, pastors, teachers, and students. Many of these people were undoubtedly members of the Strengthen Education Society, with whom Mao had extensive contacts. Mao, himself, as the director of a primary school, might have been there. Eighty volunteer teachers were recruited from the teaching staff of the government, missionary, and private schools, and some sixty rooms were donated in schools, churches, guild halls, temples, clubhouses, private homes, police stations, and at the YMCA (Hayford, 1973: 47-49). (The clubhouses referred to may have been union offices, since many unions were called julobu [an approximation of the English word club].)

The night schools of this YMCA-sponsored mass education campaign opened in March with 1,400 students in attendance. They met every night for an hour and a half, and the first class graduated in July. Twelve hundred students successfully completed the course and were awarded their diplomas by the warlord governor Zhao Hengti. The program was considered a success, and in July a new Hunan Mass Education Association formed to develop literacy further among the populace. And they then planned a campaign for the autumn of 1922 which would involve 1,500 students (Hayford, 1973: 49-50). There is no doubt that this YMCA campaign was used by the Communists to organize workers.<sup>1</sup> Mao instructed "individual Party members of some social standing who were active in the leadership of the mass education movement" to use it to help the Party set up night schools for workers (Li Rui, 1957: 167).

The Communists, however, did not like the YMCA's textbook, the Thousand Character Text, which was published in February 1922. According to one source, it was "completely composed of religious propaganda" (JBN, 1959: 434). However, given the few fragments of the lessons still available in the records, that appears to be an exaggeration. The material was not all religious, but it was boring and unimaginative. A typical lesson read, "One person teaches; ten people study. The teacher teaches; the students study.



The teacher teaches the students; the students learn from the teacher" (Yen, 1925: 3). Other lessons were entitled, "Buying Vegetables," and "The Family Eats Dinner" (Brockman, 1925: 92).

In order to develop material better suited for his own purposes, Mao went to Li Liuru, who is referred to as the "director of mass education" (Li Rui, 1957: 167)<sup>2</sup> (whose director of mass education is unclear. Most likely he represented the Strengthen Education Society). He put together a four-volume Peoples' Reader, which was published in serial form in a local vernacular newspaper and in a separate and complete edition in October 1922 (Li Rui, 1957: 167; Hayford, 1973: 49). Mao had suggested the general theme "labor is sacred," and Li, using material from the old Chinese history texts, traced the evolution of humans from cave dwelling eaters of raw meat who wore leaves or hides, and hunted, fished, or herded, and used stone tools, to more modern peoples who lived in societies characterized by farming, thatched roof houses, silk and cotton clothing, and handicraft production. Machine production was seen as the end product of this development.

Another related purpose of the Communist textbook was to emphasize the irrationalities of the capitalist system and to create class consciousness among the workers. One of the pieces read:

There is not one item of clothing, food, or shelter which is not created out of human labor, the labor of workers and peasants. Nevertheless these compatriots who till the fields and labor in the factories somehow or other have no nice clothes to wear, do not have enough to eat, and do not have a decent place to live. This is surely a great injustice! (Li Rui, 1957: 167).

Another lesson was even more pointed:

One's livelihood in human society should be "from each according to his ability, and to each according to his merit [sic]." It certainly is not fitting that the bureaucrats, warlords, and capitalists feast off the people and, without lifting a finger, acquire the things which the people have made (Li Rui, 1957: 168).<sup>3</sup>

YMCA employees apparently did not notice for some time that some of the night schools in their program were using these Marxist lessons. But other people did. As the strike wave of the autumn of 1922 rolled over Hunan, the YMCA secretary mentioned the problem in his 1922 Annual Report:

Our work with the apprentices in our Boy's Division and with laborers in our

Industrial Department has also caused the Association to fall under the censure of the keepers of many shops and factories. It has just been called to our attention that there are many who are saying that the Association has been responsible for the large number of strikes that have occurred in the city. Of course, this has no basis in fact, for, whenever we have had the opportunity, we have advised the workers not to strike, but to seek readjustment of conditions in other ways (Rounds, 1922: YMCA HL X951.01).

*THE DECISIONS OF THE SECOND PARTY  
CONGRESS AND THE AUGUST PLENUM*

In the midst of this YMCA-sponsored mass education movement, Mao left Hunan to attend the Second CCP Congress which was held in Shanghai in July 1922. However, he "forgot the name of the place where it was to be held, could not find any comrades, and missed it." He was not the only one. Li Dazhao and the delegates from Guangzhou also missed the conference (Chang Kuo-t'ao, 1971: 247). Mao then "returned to Hunan and vigorously pushed the work among labor unions" (Snow, 1968: 158).

The meetings that Mao missed were important ones. A number of events had transpired to bring about a shift in the Party's perspective on the revolution. The Communist International (Comintern) for some time had been advocating a policy based on a theory of revolutionary stages. Colonies, or semicolonies like China, were not ready for socialist revolution. Such countries first had to go through national democratic (bourgeois) revolutions that would end imperialist penetration, unify the country, promote industrialization, create democratic political institutions, and guarantee civil liberties. Once these reforms were accomplished, conditions for a socialist revolution would ripen. In the meantime, Communists should join with the national bourgeois and assist them in their anti-imperialist and antimilitarist campaigns.

The Comintern's candidate for leader of the national revolution in China was Sun Yat-sen, the head of the Nationalist Party. They had contacted him as early as 1920, but the first fruitful discussion took place in December 1921. J. T. M. Sneevliet (known in China as Maring), a Dutch representative of the Comintern, managed to find Sun in Guilin, Guangxi (Wilbur, 1976: 119-120). Exactly what was discussed or agreed on is not known, but it appears that Maring convinced Sun Yat-sen that Russia was a reasonable ally for the nationalists. The radical policies of war communism pursued

during the Russian Civil War had been abandoned, and Lenin's new economic policy looked moderate by comparison (Harrison, 1972: 43). A major turning point was reached in January 1922 when both the Nationalist Party and the Communist Party sent delegates to Moscow for the First Congress of the Toilers of the Far East. The Comintern took this opportunity to press its strategy on both groups, and one founding member of the Communist Party has commented, "The changes in policy made by the Chinese Communist Party [were] no doubt due to that conference (Ch'en Kung-po, 1966: 33, 89).

At the same time that the Comintern was insisting upon an alliance with national democratic forces, events in China transpired to make that strategy look somewhat more attractive. In the months immediately preceding the Second Congress there was great hope that China was about to be unified and that constitutional government was about to be realized. In May 1922, the Zhili faction had triumphed in the north. The only remaining obstacles to national unification were Sun Yat-sen and the dissident parliament in Guangzhou. In order to get Sun Yat-sen to agree to resign his presidency and recognize the Beijing government, the Zhili faction had promised a return to constitutional government, the recall of the parliament that had been disbanded in 1917, and the reinauguration of the president of 1917, Li Yuanhong (who had been vice-president when Yuan Shikai died and thus had a legal claim on the office). Li did resume the presidency, and one of his first acts in office was to cancel an old order for the arrest of Sun Yat-sen. He then proceeded to appoint a cabinet that included many southerners and technically qualified individuals respected by the various southern factions, including Tan Yankai, who was to fill the post of minister of the interior (Nathan, 1976: 176-191).

Although this generosity on the part of the Zhili clique was, in reality, self-serving and something less than genuine, it turned out to be highly effective in mobilizing popular support behind the new government. Many articulate and respected liberals supported the plan (Nathan, 1976: 179), and the optimism that it engendered seemed highly contagious, even among Communists. Some of them, too, in July 1922, seemed willing to give the democratic forces a chance.

Unlike the First CCP Congress which had adopted an attitude of "independence, aggression, and exclusion" toward all other parties (Ch'en Kung-po, 1966: 80), the Second Congress followed the Com-

intern lead and decided to "act jointly with" the Nationalist Party. "... A temporary union with the Nationalists is necessary for us to overthrow the pressure of our enemies — the feudal militarists internally and the international imperialists externally ..." (Harrison, 1972: 43-48).

The Congress also clearly had its attention focused on the new Beijing government, and on Wu Peifu, a powerful commander in the Zhili faction. The Congress urged Party members to "rush into parliament which is menaced by the feudal militarist party," and described Wu Peifu as "a comparatively progressive militarist" (Ch'en Kung-po, 1966: 122, 112). Wu Peifu's program promised the protection of labor, and Li Dazhao was in the process of negotiating an agreement with him to allow union organizing to go unmolested under his jurisdiction (Chesneaux, 1968: 191-192; Meisner, 1973: 210-211). The Manifesto of the Congress pictured Wu as a man who had fooled the foreigners. It claimed that although the British and American imperialists had supported him against his rivals in this latest war, they had not expected his victory to lead to a unified China. The Manifesto further asserted that when Wu put forward his program of armament reduction and the end of the warlord system, the Americans realized they had been deceived and threw their support to the defeated Manchurian warlord Zhang Zuolin. Thus Wu Peifu, a leader of the newly triumphant Zhili faction, was portrayed as a man upholding a policy that was advantageous to the beleaguered and oppressed Chinese bourgeoisie at the expense of the imperialists (Ch'en Kung-po, 1966: 112).

Regarding the beleaguered and oppressed bourgeoisie, the Manifesto declared: "... Oppressed by the great organization of capitalism, how can the newly prospering Chinese bourgeoisie freely develop and compete and reach an independent position? They can only become the medium of world capitalism." At first, this would appear to be a condemnation of the Chinese bourgeoisie. They were dependent on international capitalism, and thus, as Chen Gongbo (Ch'en Kung-po) phrased it, "the toys" of the foreigners. However, read in context, it is by no means a condemnation; it is an entreaty for the workers to come to the aid of Chinese capital, to help it throw off the yoke of imperialism, so that it could develop unobstructed. The Manifesto continued:

Moreover, the foreign capitalists for the sake of their own development and to

secure special privileges assist the militarists purposely to interrupt the development of young Chinese capitalism so the young Chinese bourgeoisie in order to prevent the economic oppression ought to rise up and struggle against international capitalism. . . . We, the proletariat, observe the existing Chinese political and economic conditions, [and] advocate that we, the proletariat and poor peasants, should assist the national revolutionary movement (Ch'en Kung-po, 1966: 114-115).

The Second Congress, in effect, accepted the argument that it was in the workers' interest, and in the interest of proletarian revolution, to join the Nationalist revolution to defeat the imperialists and the warlords, who oppressed the workers. The Chinese proletariat would not be able to develop to its full potential until they were defeated. The acceptance of this proposition was a departure from the attitudes of the First Congress, which had tended to ignore China's semicolonial status, but it was not particularly controversial. Nor was it controversial to suggest that the proletariat could use some allies to defeat the warlords and imperialists. The controversy would arise out of the decision to ally with the national bourgeoisie and the Nationalist Party in particular in order to accomplish these goals. To justify this support of the national bourgeoisie, it was suggested that a bourgeois democratic victory would provide an atmosphere conducive to the growth of unions and that eventually the unions would be strong enough to take on the bourgeoisie itself (Ch'en Kung-po, 1966: 120).

In line with this thinking, the Second Congress changed the wording of the Party's "prime object." What had read "To form industrial unions is the chief aim of our party" was now changed to read, "To aid the working class is the prime object of the Chinese Communist Party" (Ch'en Kung-po, 1966: 119). Given the previous argument that the triumph of national democratic forces would aid the working class, this redefinition opened up the possibility of directing Communist energies toward a more general antimilitarist and anti-imperialist program that could ultimately lead to a victory for the national democratic forces.

But there were limits to how far the Communist Party was willing to go to help the Nationalist Party and the national bourgeoisie. Those people who attended the Second Congress were quite adamant concerning one point: that this cooperation with Nationalist forces should in no way curtail the independence of the Communist Party. "The proletariat ought to join and assist the Nationalists, but by no means, to give up the management of their own party. . . . On

the contrary, they should strive for their own class independently" (Ch'en Kung-po, 1966: 120). Nor did it mean that the Party should slight the unionization movement. On the contrary, the Second Congress spelled out a much more detailed set of policies for its organizers.

The "Decision concerning the Labor Union Movement and the Chinese Communist Party," Part Six of The Decisions of the Second Conference of the Communist Party of China, 1922, had nineteen points. The most important were: (1) to exclude all employers from the unions; (2) to seek the improvement of the living and working standards of the workers; (3) to engage in political education and political activity, and not merely seek increased benefits; (4) to abolish the contractors' control over hiring, firing, and wages; (5) to structure the unions so that they would be unified, centralized, and disciplined; (6) with regard to union membership, to make no distinctions based on race, sex, age, strength, biological or social differences, religion, political opinion, skill or lack thereof; (7) to cooperate with nationalists, anarchists, and even Christians in order to obtain better conditions for the workers; and (8) to work for effective labor legislation (Ch'en Kung-po, 1966: 122-125).

The last of these points, that of working for labor legislation, was related to the expectation that a legitimate national congress was about to assemble in Beijing. It was, of course, a false hope in warlord China, but that was not yet apparent in July 1922. Thus the Labor Secretariat met at the Second Congress to draw up draft legislation which they hoped would be considered by the hoped-for reassembled legislature. Their draft included special protection for women and child laborers, insurance, adult education, a minimum wage, and guaranteed paid vacations (Ch'en Kung-po, 1966: 116). And the Congress as a whole adopted a platform that called for "laws profitable to workers, peasants, and women," and "the unrestricted suffrage of the workers and peasants without discrimination as to sex in the national, provincial, district, municipal and various assemblies, with absolute freedom of speech, press, meeting, assemblage, and strike" (Ch'en Kung-po, 1966: 116).

One would think that the Comintern would have been pleased with this significant turn toward their position, but it was not. Even though the Second Congress had completely reversed the isolationist, orthodox positions of the First Congress and had opened the door for close cooperation between the Communists and

the Nationalists, the Comintern did not think that the Party had gone far enough. The Dutch representative, Maring (who also had missed the Second Congress), summoned a special plenum of the Party which met in Hangzhou on August 22. He insisted that Communists, as individuals, had to join the Nationalist Party. Rather than the two parties forming an alliance of equals, the Communists would form a "block within" the Nationalist Party. And to rationalize this decision, the Comintern insisted that the Nationalist Party was not simply a party of the national bourgeoisie. On the contrary, it was a coalition of four classes (the nationalist bourgeoisie, the petty bourgeoisie, the peasants, and the proletariat) dedicated to pursuing the national revolution against the warlords and imperialists. Initially all five members of the Chinese Central Committee were opposed to this arrangement on the grounds that it would compromise the independence of the Party. However, since the Comintern wanted an alliance with Sun Yat-sen, and those were the only terms to which he would agree, the Comintern representative, Maring, invoked the discipline of the Party and the Comintern and thus induced a majority vote in favor of the "block within." At this point, however, all members of the Party were not required to join the Nationalist Party; and many members, still opposed to the "bloc within," did not do so (Harrison, 1972: 48-49).

*MAO'S POLITICAL POSTURE ON THE  
EVE OF THE STRIKE WAVE*

Mao Zedong was not at either of these meetings, neither the Second Congress nor the August Plenum, but he surely received the decisions made there, either in the mail or in some other way. His reaction to them is not a matter of record. One can, however, speculate. It is unlikely that Mao, as a Hunanese, shared the enthusiasm or the optimism that surrounded the triumph of the Zhili clique. First of all, Mao had seen Tan Yankai and the Hunanese liberal reformers take power at the provincial level and lose it three or four times (depending on how one counts). His hopes for democratic reforms had already been raised and dashed too many times. (And, in fact, the hopes of the liberals in Beijing were dashed, just as those of the Hunanese had been earlier.) By November 1922 Li Yuanhong's new cabinet had collapsed, and by January 1923 it was clear that his days as president were numbered (Nathan, 1976: 199, 201).

Second, it is unlikely that Mao would have been very enthusiastic about a Zhili clique victory. Zhao Hengti, the enemy of democracy in Hunan, the man who had subdued or suppressed the liberal and radical intellectuals, made war against a neighboring province, and executed two labor leaders the same month that he promulgated a liberal provincial constitution, was an ally of Wu Peifu, the man whom the Congress had called "a comparatively progressive militarist," one of the Zhili clique leaders who were supposed to reinstitute constitutional government. Even though Zhao Hengti was relatively autonomous, the victory of the Zhili clique with whom he was allied, no doubt, strengthened his position within the province. Whatever it might mean at the national level, it was unlikely to improve the prospects for democracy in Hunan.

It is also unlikely that Mao supported the idea of a Communist "bloc within" the Nationalist Party. He had been at the First Congress that had rejected any alliances with any parties, and he had not been at the Second Congress or the August Plenum to be persuaded otherwise. And it is known that he came to the Third Congress in June 1923 still opposed to an alliance with the Nationalist Party. At that Congress, he would be one of three principle speakers against the Comintern position that CCP members should join the Nationalist Party. (By coincidence all three of these speakers came from the jurisdiction of the Hunan Federation of Labor organizations, including Zhang Guotao, who was not a Hunanese but a native of Pingxiang xian in Jiangxi, where the coal miners at Anyuan had joined the Hunan Federation. The third opposition speaker was Cai Hesen, one of Mao's closest friends and a martyr in 1927 [Chang Kuo-t'ao, 1971: 308].)

In particular, these three would object to an important rationale for the bloc-within strategy: that the Chinese proletariat was too weak to do anything more than become the left wing of the national revolution. They agreed that in China the proletariat was a relatively small percentage of the population but, they said, it was spirited and united. Mao did not like the implications of playing a numbers game. If they wanted to play that game, he said, he could point out that in Hunan not only were the workers few in number, not only were the Communists few in number, but so were the members of the Nationalist Party few in number. If numbers were all that mattered then they should organize the peasants. Hunan's hills and valleys were filled with them.

Mao also objected to an alliance on practical grounds. The Nationalist Party was not a powerful organization. Its forces did not extend beyond one corner of Guangdong Province. And, he added,



insofar as the Nationalists had any power, it was based on peasant armies. In fact, throughout Chinese history "rebellions and revolutions had peasant insurrections as their mainstay," and the Communist Party, too, could organize peasants into a nationalist force to defeat the warlords and imperialists (Chang Kuo-t'ao, 1971: 307-309). There was no need for the Communists to join the Nationalist Party. If Mao was against the alliance with the Nationalists in the summer of 1923, it is very likely that he was opposed to it in the summer and autumn of 1922, as well.

Yet another theoretical problem that these decisions created for the Hunanese was the question of how Communist labor organizers were supposed to assist the national bourgeoisie. The apparent contradiction between organizing a labor movement which might be directed at Chinese employers as well as foreigners and, at the same time, supporting those employers who were members of the oppressed Chinese bourgeoisie — and thus a part of the four-class alliance within the Nationalist Party — was raised at the August Plenum in 1922 and apparently was dismissed without serious discussion (Harrison, 1972: 40). But that did not make the problem go away. Were Communists to refrain from organizing unions in companies owned by Nationalist Chinese? Or if they did organize unions in such companies, were they to refrain from striking against these Nationalist owners? The Second Congress, at least, had preserved the idea of an independent labor movement and an independent party, but the August Plenum decision which required some Communists to join the Nationalist Party clouded the issue of just how independent the Communist labor movement would be. Since about half of China's workers were employed by foreign firms concentrated in five of the six major industrial regions of China — Shanghai, Manchuria, Shandong, Hebei, and Guangzhou — the contradiction could, if the Party organizers wished, be avoided by confining unionization efforts to foreign-owned factories. The sixth area, the one with the smallest concentration of foreign enterprise, was the Hunan-Hubei area. In Hubei there were a few foreign industries which employed large numbers of Chinese workers; in Hunan there were none (Great Britain, Foreign Office, 1925: 32; Chesneaux, 1968: 43-46). That particular solution simply was not an option in Hunan. Again, there is no written record of Mao's attitude regarding this apparent contradiction. One can only examine what he did following the meetings of July and August 1922, and from these activities attempt to deduce what his attitudes were. In

fact, as the analysis of the strikes will show, he gave no quarter to the national bourgeoisie. All of the evidence indicates that from December 1920 until the summer of 1923, a time during which the Party's policies changed significantly, Mao's vision of the Chinese revolution did not change. He concentrated increasingly on propagating Marxism and organizing urban workers.

Mao's basic strategies of using the mass education movement as a way to make independent contact with workers while at the same time trying to convert the anarchist constituency into Marxists did not change. It simply matured. He would continue to use nationalistic and democratic causes as a cover, and the liberals themselves as a lever, for the Communist labor movement. By disguising unionization and the propagation of Marxism as educational reform, the Hunanese Communists were able to make use of the resources, moral and material, of both the reformist literati and the YMCA. Nine strikes had been called and twelve unions organized before the YMCA secretary realized that his organization was being held responsible for the strike activity or before Zhao Hengti tried to close down Self-Education University ("Shengxian xia zhi Hunan," 1923: 74). Relatively unobstructed by the powers that be in the early stage, the major obstacle to Communist ascendancy in Hunan's labor movement had been the anarchists. But Zhao Hengti had eliminated that obstacle for them. After he had decapitated the anarchists' leaders and destroyed their organization, the CCP was able to pick up the pieces, and they seem to have been significant pieces. Anarchist contacts played a strategic role in all four strikes to be examined here. Owing to Zhao's destruction of the Hunan Labor Association, Mao Zedong and the other CCP leaders were forced to abandon their first plan of essentially taking over the anarchist organization just at the moment when it was about to succeed, but this may have been a blessing in disguise. They were then forced to weave together their own organization. But the Communists, starting in January 1922, did much more than simply reassemble what the anarchists had left behind. The membership of the Hunan Labor Association had numbered 3,000 in January 1922. By early 1923 the Communist-led Hunan Federation of Labor Organizations would have a membership of 28,000. The secret of their success should become apparent from an analysis of the strikes they led.

NOTES

<sup>1</sup> JBN also mentions the YMCA program but refrains from drawing any connection between it and the Communists. "...With an American, Lan Anshi [Lawrence Hall], as director, the lessons were completely composed of religious propaganda." See JBN, p. 434.

<sup>2</sup> Aside from the fact that Li Liuru was Hunanese, and a deputy procurator in the Supreme People's Procuratorate after 1949, there is little information about him. He is also the author of a historical novel, Sixty Stirring Years.

<sup>3</sup> Charles W. Hayford (p. 51), the biographer of James Yen, expresses the opinion that there was not much difference in the content of the material used by the YMCA and that used by the Communists. This writer, however, judging from the fragments available, does perceive a considerable difference in the political content of the material. That James Yen himself was aware of the Communist material in the schools is suggested by his private correspondence in the summer of 1922. "I suppose you know we do not stop with merely teaching the people to read. In fact, we have made definite plans to produce 'Foundation Character' literature in order to give them the right stuff to read [emphasis in the original]; for the first without the second would be nothing short of disastrous. . . . In a word, through these sections, we hope to Christianize the thinking and the living of millions of common people of China." See James Y. C. Yen, Correspondence to J. C. Clark, Esq., dated July 14, 1922, YMCA HL 951.03.

## The Anyuan Railroad Workers and Miners' Strike

The most famous strike organized by the Hunan Labor Secretariat, that of the Anyuan miners and railroad workers, was not even in Hunan, a fact that has led to some confusion in Western studies of Communist Party history. Anyuan, the site of the strike, is a town located high in the mountains that define the Hunan-Jiangxi border and is, in fact, on the Jiangxi side in the county (xian) of Pingxiang. However, since Anyuan lies on the Hunan side of the watershed, near the Lu River, a tributary of Hunan's Xiang River (Chen Ligang, 1937: n.p.), this area always has been linked more closely with the cities of Hunan's Xiang River Valley than to Nanchang, Jiangxi's capital. This natural phenomenon was reinforced by the construction of the Zhuzhou-Pingxiang Railroad which roughly duplicates the course of the Lu tributary. The labor movement spread along the railroad from the Xiang River Valley up the mountainsides to Anyuan, and thus it happened that these coal miners and railroad workers in Jiangxi became members of a union that was an integral part of the Hunan Labor Secretariat.

The recent fame that has accrued to this strike and to the union that carried it out is largely due to the publicity they received during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution that broke out in China in 1966, more than forty years after the events in question. Although the activities of the Hunan Labor Secretariat at Anyuan and the strike there in September 1922 were not unknown in China before 1966, it was the Cultural Revolution debate over Liu Shaoqi's past that elevated Anyuan into a newly found fame. Liu, president of the Peoples' Republic of China from 1958 until the Cultural Revolution, was under attack, and the attackers dug up his entire record, including that part of it that dealt with his leadership of the union from 1922 to 1925. (He was its head from 1923 to 1925.) His role was criticized and Mao's emphasized. The

piece de resistance of the agitprop art of the Cultural Revolution was a painting entitled "Chairman Mao Goes to Anyuan."

Nevertheless, even if the leadership at Anyuan had not become an issue in the Cultural Revolution, the union would still be of great intrinsic interest to historians of the Party and the labor movement. The September 18, 1922, strike settlement was the first major victory of the Hunan Labor Secretariat, and even after the unionization movement in other areas suffered serious setbacks in 1923, Anyuan remained a stronghold of Communist-led union power for several years thereafter. Furthermore, the significance of the contract labor system as a factor in the Chinese labor movement as a whole is illuminated by the material on this strike, as is the dilemma of how one can or cannot pursue a labor movement within the context of an alliance between the proletariat and the national bourgeoisie against imperialism and militarism. And, three men who would become major leaders of the Communist Party were involved, Mao Zedong, Li Lisan, and Liu Shaoqi, as were a thousand workers who later made up a significant portion of the infant Red Army as it retreated into the Jinggang Mountains, south of Anyuan, after the labor movement's defeat in 1927. There is no question that Anyuan deserves a place in the history books.

#### *THE MINE AND THE COMPANY*

Pingxiang xian, the site of the coal mine, was remote from both centers of population and government. It was a typical border region, according to Zhang Guotao (Chang Kuo-t'ao), a well-known Communist leader prior to 1936 who was born and grew up in the xian. Small bandit gangs thrived among the bamboo groves and evergreen forests. Peddlers and smugglers alike who wandered throughout the basin of Hunan, Hubei, and Jiangxi passed along its mountain paths and frequented its country inns. Gambling houses, opium dens, and brothels proliferated along the provincial boundary so that the proprietors could move rapidly to the opposite side if authorities approached. And under such lawless conditions, secret societies flourished. Even the Pingxiang xian public school harbored a seventy-year-old watchman who had been a Taiping rebel in his youth. He had fled to this mountain town, changed his name, and buried his past, but still was willing in his old age to entertain the sons of the gentry who attended that school with stories of Taiping exploits. Meanwhile, more ordinary folk made their living by

farming, mining, and making paper, firecrackers, and linen (Chang Kuo-t'ao, 1971: 5-6, 14; Li Rui, 1957: 180).

Although located in this relatively remote and lawless setting, the Pingxiang colliery was not an insignificant part of the national economic picture. In 1922 it was the property of the Hanyeping Coal and Iron Company, Ltd., the largest Chinese-owned company in the nation. All of its executives and shareholders were Chinese. The company in that year was capitalized at over U.S.\$60 million and directly employed at least 23,000 people (Heintzleman, 1922: 3). The colliery was the third largest producer in China and turned out twice as much coal as the next largest Chinese-owned mine. It was the only coal mine of any importance in the whole Chang Jiang Valley and was reputed to produce the best coke "yet known in the Far East" (Smith, 1926: 71, Hsieh, 1926: 18). Nevertheless, this wholly Chinese mine was overshadowed by two others: the Japanese owned mines at Fushun in the northeast and the Kailan mines at Tangshan, Hebei, which were jointly owned by British and Chinese. Production at Anyuan from 1912 to 1924 never amounted to even half as much as at either of those partially or wholly foreign mines, even during World War I (Hsieh, 1926: 18-19).

Even in 1922 the Pingxiang colliery "walked on two legs," to use a slogan of the Great Leap Forward. One of the two main shafts was still mined by the old methods; the other had been modernized at the end of the nineteenth century. In 1894 the governor-general of Hunan and Hubei, Zhang Zhidong, had collaborated with the government entrepreneur and director-general of the Hanyang Ironworks, Sheng Xuanhuai, in an effort to develop these mines as a guandu shangban (officially supervised and merchant managed) enterprise (Feuerwerker, 1964: 110; and 1958: 12). It was part of a lengthy self-strengthening effort begun by Chinese officials in the 1860s. In 1898 the Chinese management had acquired a U.S.\$3 million loan from Germany with which they had purchased German equipment, along with which came German engineers ("Pinghsiang Colliery," 1916: 375-376). Thus while in 1922 miners had to pull baskets of coal out of one shaft by their own brute force, the other shaft had an electric trolley. The coal might then be heated to make coke in about 300 German ovens, or it might be coked in a great number of Chinese ovens. The colliery also possessed a large machine and bridge shop, an iron foundry, and repair shops. A 600-kilowatt generator supplied the power for

the various operations. All of these, too, had come from Germany (Hoyt, 1923: 316-317).

Because Pingxiang xian was far from the source of supplies, the company had set up these repair shops as well as machinery and appliance manufacturing shops at the site. Steam engines, compressors, pumps, lathes, and almost everything in the heavy machinery line except electrical supplies were produced in the area. The foundry could turn out castings weighing up to three tons (Hoyt, 1923: 315-317; "Pinghsiang Colliery," 1916: 375-377).

In 1908, the colliery's guandu shangban status ended and Sheng Xuanhuai amalgamated the Daye, Hupei, iron mines, the Hanyang steel mill, and the Pingxiang coal mines and officially formed the Hanyebing Coal and Iron Company, Ltd. It was a purely commercial concern (shangban), with Sheng as its largest shareholder (Feuerwerker, 1964: 90). The production process which he introduced formed a triangle. The coal was mined and coked at Anyuan and moved by railroad to Zhuzhou and then down the Xiang River to Hanyang.<sup>1</sup> Iron ore from Daye was moved by railroad to the Chang Jiang and then up the river to the Hanyang Ironworks. The great bulk of the production at Hanyang was in the form of rails, but there was some structural steel produced for sale in Shanghai and Hankou. In 1922, 70-80 percent of the mill's production was sent to Japan (Heintzman, 1922: 3).

These exports to Japan were indicative of a general problem for Chinese industry — the lack of a domestic market — and thus a problematic dependence on the international market. China's per capita consumption of pig iron was only one percent of that in England or Germany, and the Hanyang Ironworks could only maintain its level of production owing to the Japanese demand for pig iron to supply its own steel industry (Smith, 1926: 73).

In theory, the company was a profit-making enterprise, but in the first twelve years of the Republic, from 1912 to 1923, its books showed a profit only in the years from 1916 to 1919 during and immediately after WWI (Feuerwerker, 1964: 93). The mill had begun manufacturing iron and steel in 1894 with high-quality raw materials (Smith, 1926: 71) produced and controlled by the same management, a market that was in part guaranteed (Feuerwerker, 1964: 88), and a cheap supply of labor (Feuerwerker, 1964: 104). Nevertheless, by 1913 the company was well on its way to becoming little more than a producer of raw materials and intermediate products for the Japanese steel works at Yawata, which had been

founded two years after the Hanyeping enterprises (Feuerwerker, 1964: 79). Owing to severe capital shortages, the company had been forced to seek loans from Japan, and in order to secure these loans, had had to sign an agreement stipulating that it sell 600,000 tons of iron ore to Japan every year at close to what had become half the market price (Heintzleman, 1922: 6).

The company's profits were also diminished by the high cost of transporting coal from Anyuan to Hanyang (Feuerwerker, 1964: 104), and the cost of pumping water to Anyuan from five miles away, which was necessary because there was no water near the mines and no reservoir at the site (Hoyt, 1923: 317). Also, because of the tremendous pressures on the tunnels, timbers and bricks were used to brace the walls and ceilings, and the pressure was so great that the timbers had to be constantly replaced. The policy of the company was to let the roofs sag until they were so low they interfered with the miners' work. This problem is reflected in the two available expense ledgers of the company. According to the ledger for August 1916, lumber was the second most expensive item (Hsieh, 1926: 14-15, 44-46; Ting and Wong, 1921: 18). In addition, according to the claims of several writers, the company was paying many unnecessary managerial personnel. Another difficulty was the growing obsolescence of the plant and equipment (Feuerwerker, 1964: 104).

To make matters worse, production was often disrupted by warlord armies. For example, two outside armies cut off communications for more than eighty days while fighting over the Zhuzhou-Pingxiang Railroad in June 1920. Then in 1921 the Jiangxi authorities requisitioned labor from the mines for its armies, to a point that affected production. In August 1921, armies from Hunan and Hubei were battling each other, and communications were cut off again, this time for two months. And in June 1922, a Guizhou army passed through, demanding funds as well as labor (Hsieh, 1926: 35). Thus, even the largest Chinese company in the nation suffered from the consequences of imperialism and warlordism, as well as other common problems of industry in a developing country.

### *THE WORKERS*

No two sources agree on how many workers there were at Anyuan. P. S. Heintzleman, the American consul general in Hankou,



stated that there were 393 men on the mine's general staff and between 5,000 and 6,000 miners (Heintzleman, 1922: 5). Li Rui, a biographer of Mao, estimated the number of miners at over 12,000 (Li Rui, 1957: 180). Cai Shufan, a worker who participated in the strike, told Helen Foster Snow that there were 13,000 miners (Snow, 1952: 84). The Industrial Magazine (Shiye zazhi), published in Changsha, stated that there were over 20,000 miners in 1922 (Shiye zazhi, No. 59 [September 1922]: "Local News," p. 8).

One finds the same variation with regard to the number of railroad workers employed on the Zhuzhou-Pingxiang line. The Industrial Magazine gave the number as over 1,500 (Shiye zazhi No. 59 [September 1922]: "Local News," p. 8), while Li Rui stated there were 4,500 railroad employees (Li Rui, 1957: 180). Probably the most reliable figures come from Liu Shaoqi and Zhu Shaolian's "Short History of the Anyuan Railroad Workers' and Miners' Union," in which they indicate that there were 12,000 miners and 1,500 railroad workers (Liu and Zhu, 1923: 4, 6). Heintzleman's figures probably do not include all the contract workers, and Li Rui's figure for the railroad workers might be a typographical error, since he usually follows the dates and figures of Liu and Zhu.

Approximately 80 percent of the miners worked inside the pits, while 20 percent worked on the surface, at the coal-washing platforms, and at various other processing sites ("Johnson Memorandum," HC, Box 7, Pkg. 8, Pt. 2, Item 16). A portion of the railroad employees and some of the Hanyeping employees were actually engaged in heavy manufacturing, making engines, compressors, pumps, and lathes ("Pingsiang Colliery," 1916: 375-377; Hoyt, 1923: 315-317).

Most workers in China during this period were peasants who had recently migrated to the cities (Chesneaux, 1968: 47-52). Others were recruited from areas which had been industrialized in an earlier period, and a few were from the handicraft sector of the economy (Chesneaux, 1968: 47-52). The origins of workers at Anyuan (insofar as they can be ascertained) coincided with this national pattern. The workers came mainly from three sources: local peasants, Daye miners (who were often first-generation workers themselves), and Hunan peasants who were often from Liuyang xian ("Pingsiang Colliery," 1922: 377). The area around Hengshan, Hunan, is also mentioned several times as the home of Anyuan workers (Zhonggong Hunan shengwei xuan chuanbu, 1952: 113-114).<sup>2</sup> Southern Hunan, in general, was a favored recruiting ground for mining contractors from as far away as Yunnan (Chesneaux, 1968: 60).

There are available two rather detailed stories of Anyuan miners. Dang Shouyi was forty years old in 1927 when he was interviewed by Anna Louise Strong. He had been an illiterate Hunanese peasant sent to work in the mines when he was seventeen because his family lacked enough land to support itself (Strong, 1935: 101). Dang described participating in a strike which he dated at "the end of the Kwanghsu [Guangxu] reign." It is probably the strike which a German engineer, Gustavus Leinung, had provoked in 1906 by increasing the work hours from eight to twelve hours a day (Strong, 1935: 101).

Dang gave a rather detailed account of his wages. It is useful to examine it since he had been employed at the mines for more than twenty years and had worked his way up from an unskilled laborer to a skilled miner. He pointed out that until the 1922 strike his wages had remained frozen since 1913, the midpoint in a period of rapid inflation (P. S. Heintzleman, "Labor Conditions in the Hankow Consular District," in U.S. Government, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of China, 1910-1929, Doc. No. 893.504/77, p. 4).<sup>3</sup>

History of Dang Shouyi's Daily Wage

	<u>Cash</u>	<u>Gold equivalent</u>
Starting wage (1904)	120	2.5¢
Resumption of 12-hour day (1906)	160	3.5¢
Became a skilled miner	300	6¢
Later	360	7¢
Shortage of labor	400	8¢
After 1922 strike	750-1000	15-20¢ (Strong, 1935: 101)

Perhaps Dang Shouyi, who was thirty-three in 1922, was atypical. Cai Shufan, who was interviewed by Helen Snow at Yanan in 1937, after he had become a general in the Red Army, described the workers in 1922 as being quite young. The majority, he said, were between the ages of fourteen and twenty-three. Cai perceived a generation gap among the miners, picturing the young ones as radicals and the older ones as conservatives (Snow, 1952: 84).<sup>4</sup>

Cai was a second generation worker; his father and uncle had originally been hired hands on landlords' farms. Later, they had found work in a variety of factories and mines, including the Han-

yang Arsenal and the Daye iron mines, a part of the Hanyeping complex. When Cai was three days old, the family moved to Anyuan (ca. 1905). The oldest of six children, Cai had two years of schooling before he entered the mines in 1920 as an apprentice, at age fifteen. Working from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., he made 3 yuan a month "doing all kinds of things with the motors, pumps, and the tram" (Helen Foster Snow, *Yenan Notebook* #15, June 3, 1937).

Helen Snow describes Cai as frank, outspoken, critical, and hot-tempered (Snow, 1952: 83). Cai, who did not go to work in the mines until 1920, seems to have been unaware of the earlier strikes at Anyuan. Perhaps his ignorance was typical of the many young workers, since Cai stated, "The workers had no idea of such a method before this time, and were surprised and happy to discover the use of the strike" (Snow, 1952: 84).

Cai picked out the German engineers as one source of the workers' discontent, not only because they beat the workers, but also because of their high salaries. He gave his own salary as a manual laborer on the motors, pumps, and trams as 3 dollars (yuan) a month, the average salary as 6 or 7 dollars a month, and the salary of the German engineers as 1,000-2,000 dollars a month (Snow, 1952: 83, 85).

There is, in addition, a short account of an Anyuan miner by the name of Xie Huaide. Born in Hengshan xian, Hunan, in 1887, Xie was part of the small sector of the working class which came from the traditional handicraft trades of China. He had joined his father in the blacksmith trade when he was ten. When he was twenty-one, in 1908, he became a miner at Anyuan. Xie was later to be active in organizing the Workers' Club, and in October 1922 he was sent along with Jiang Xianyun to organize the lead and zinc miners at Shuikoushan (Zhonggong Hunan shengwei xuanchuanbu, 1952: 114).<sup>5</sup>

Wages were low and working conditions were poor all over China, and mining is a very dangerous business in any country. In China, as in many developing countries, safety precautions were few. Cave-ins, floods, and fires were described as frequent (Li Rui, 1957: 180). The last major disaster at Anyuan to come to the attention of the central government occurred on August 18, 1917, at 6:00 in the evening. One overseer, a man known as Wang Junchen, was killed, along with twenty-six miners (Hsieh, 1926: 69).

Detailed statistics for casualties at Anyuan are not available, but one can form a general impression from the reports of two

other mining companies. At the mines of the Benqihu Coal and Iron Company, there were thirteen fires and three flood disasters from 1912 to 1923. During the same period, 26,044 miners were injured and 853 killed. At the Fushun mines, there were 650 workers killed or injured between 1912 and 1923 (Hsieh, 1926: 71-72). There was a saying among the Anyuan miners that "a man goes down into the mines at dawn, but doesn't know if he will come up again at night" (Li Rui, 1957: 180).

There was a small bungalow-sized hospital on the Anyuan grounds for treating injured workers ("Johnson Memorandum," HC, Box 7, Pkg. 8, Pt. 2, Item 16), but the labor organizers claimed that it was ill-managed and that the doctors were callous (Liu and Zhu, 1923: 6). However, they may just have been overwhelmed by the size of their task. The miners worked at least twelve hours a day, lacked proper clothing (Li Rui, 1957: 181), and according to a Rockefeller Institute report, were disease-ridden. Owing to prolonged contact with infected earth, 81.6 percent of the surface miners and 90.2 percent of the pit workers suffered from intestinal worms (ankylostomosis, or hookworm) (cited in Chesneaux, 1968: 79).

#### *TRADITIONAL LABOR ORGANIZATIONS*

Even though the Hanyeping mine and coking facilities at Anyuan were, in part, modern, the great majority of the workers were still enmeshed in a traditional or preindustrial form of labor-management relations — the contract labor system, in which the worker was hired, paid, and managed by a contractor and had little or no direct contact with the company. This system can be found in a rudimentary form in China as early as the twelfth century (Song dynasty) and was in widespread use by the seventeenth century (late Ming, early Qing) (Wright, 1981: 3). It seems to have been patterned after the system of agricultural work gangs that were banded and disbanded during and after the busy seasons in the countryside. The labor contractors were generally of peasant origin and enjoyed the support of the local landlords when they came to recruit for factories and mines (Chesneaux, 1968: 61).

The system was not unique to China (Wright, 1981: 8) and was quite well adapted for economies in which labor recruitment was problematic, capital was in short supply, demand was unsteady, and small-scale commercial talent was more plentiful than large-

scale management expertise (Wright, 1981: 8-15). Although many foreigners in China were critical of the system, they, too, used it in their operations, for it was difficult for foreign managers who did not understand either the language or the local culture to directly manage a Chinese labor force (Chesneaux, 1968: 57-60).

Foreigners, Chinese reformers, and revolutionaries objected to this contract labor system, saying that it was inefficient, wasteful, subject to widespread corruption, provoked labor unrest, and interfered with the proper management and training of the labor force (Torgasheff, 1930: 532; Wright, 1981: 15-18). It was, however, quite difficult to get rid of it. It appears that in Anyuan at least, Chinese labor contractors had imposed the system on a foreign manager who had been determined to abolish it.

Gustavus Leinung, the German engineer and manager at Anyuan, told his sad story to a reporter in 1916. To begin with, the workers were unskilled and unruly. "The local [ Pingxiang ? ] men were opium smokers and did not want to work regular hours. The men from Luyang [ Liuyang, Hunan ] were a disorderly, lawless lot, and those from Tayeh [ Daye, Hubei ] thought that they could draw pay without working." He explained to the journalist that the Chinese "must be driven to doing right, and habitually disobey orders unless constantly watched" ("Pingsiang Colliery," 1916: 378).

Leinung, as the first foreign manager of the Anyuan mines, had tried to dispense with contractors upon his arrival in 1898. After six months he gave up, but rather than use the existing contractors, he picked out some of the miners he knew and made them contractors. In less than a year, however, these men no longer worked at the mines, but rather moved into the county seat and only appeared at the mines on the first and fifteenth of the month, when they rode in on sedan chairs dressed in silk finery ("Pingsiang Colliery," 1916: 378).

At another point prior to 1906, Leinung tried again to break the power of the contractors, since their exploitation of the workers was leading to labor unrest. Previously both the food and housing of the workers had been supplied by the contractors. Leinung attempted to remove this function from them by building huge mining quarters with kitchens and stores. The contractors had threatened to strike, but Leinung managed to isolate the individuals who had caused the trouble and succeeded in getting one to inform on the others. He then paid off the ringleader and forced him to leave ("Pingsiang Colliery," 1916: 379).

That the Western manager had made small inroads into the traditional contractors' rights did not automatically ensure that the workers got better treatment. Nor were the Anyuan workers' food and lodging free. The company simply deducted the charges for these items from what was paid to the contractor, who then deducted it from the workers' wages (Johnson Memorandum: HC, Box 7, Pkg. VIII, Pt. 2, Item 16). The four large dormitories for the men who worked inside the mines had twenty-five rooms each. Each room was about ten feet across and twenty feet long and was lined with three-tiered bunk beds, so as to accommodate at least forty-eight men per room. The men who worked outside the mines had separate dormitories, equally crowded (Liu and Zhu, 1923: 5). During winter the buildings were unheated, and in summer they were infested with insects and mosquitoes. The meals were mainly rice, flavored with vegetables. One account claims that the vegetables were bought wholesale and were often rotten by the time they reached the miners' bowls (Strong, 1935: 101).

With regard to working hours, Leinung's policy seems to have been to keep the work force as small as possible and the hours as long as possible, in order to keep the wage bill down. While Leinung was absent for six months in 1906, his subordinate had allowed more miners to be hired and for the work shift to be shortened from twelve to eight hours. When Leinung returned, he reinstituted the old shift, "convinced that he would get much more work out of the men if he reverted to the twelve-hour shift and reduced the number of men" ("Pingsiang Colliery," 1916: 380). This provoked a strike, which was put down. Shortly afterward there was an uprising in the area led by a secret society, the Gelao hui (The Elder Brother Society), and a revolutionary alliance, the Tongmeng hui, against the local governments. The uprising started at Anyuan, where the Gelao hui members had become contractors and thus gained a considerable amount of influence among the workers (Lewis, 1965: 202-207). The uprising failed.

The staff, both Chinese and foreign, and the contractors were allowed to beat the workers or otherwise punish them, and the mining authorities did not interfere, since this "contributed to their authority in dealing with the workers." Among the variety of punishments available to the staff and contractors were making the worker kneel on a hot stove, or making him wear a cangue around his neck. Other possibilities included forcing the worker to carry a steel ball on his back, horse-whipping, or turning the

worker over to the police to be interrogated by torture (Liu and Zhu, 1958: 6).

As can be seen from the role played by secret societies in the 1906 uprising, there was a certain linkage between contractors and these traditional organizations. That this linkage was not limited to Anyuan is evident from Zhang Guotao's description of the 1921 strike at the British-American Tobacco Company in the Pudong section of Shanghai. The chief inspector of the factory was a member of the notorious Green Society (Qing bang), and the workers claimed that they could not have gotten their jobs without becoming one of his "disciples" (Chang Kuo-t'ao, 1971: 172).

The contract system and the secret societies also seem to have overlapped with the regional fraternities (bang). (These regional organizations should be distinguished from the huiguan, which were regional associations of more prominent merchants and gentry.) The bang were comprised of small merchants, contractors, workers, and coolies from one particular area, and the influence of a given fraternity depended upon that of its contractors and other, more important, members (Deng, 1949: 2-3).

Chesneaux suggests that these regional fraternities may have been the transitional form between the agricultural seasonal labor system and the full-fledged contract labor system. The leader was the man who "had got together a group from his own district and formed a bang, and it was he who conducted negotiations for hiring it out" (Chesneaux, 1968: 117). In his critique of the Anyuan union, written in 1923, Liu Shaoqi indicates that there was a great deal of regional rivalry among the workers and that it often produced disputes and physical fights. He linked these altercations directly to the bang and the work sites, which could indicate that various bang monopolized certain work sites through their contractors (Liu, 1958: 6). Such fighting seems to have been a major pre-occupation of the miners, as indicated both by Liu's critique and by reminiscences of the workers.

Yuan Pingao, a miner, told a story about an interview he had with one of the Communist organizers. Asked to enumerate the good points of his contractor, Yuan immediately replied, "He always wins fights." He then went on to explain that the workers at his work site frequently fought with those from other sites, and that the contractor cheered them on (Yuan Pingao, 1959: 157-161). Liu refers to these incidents as "boundary disputes," which indicates that the regional competition among workers and con-

tractors for work sites may have been at the root of the problem (Liu, 1958: 6).

In the terminology used by Liu to refer to these bang, there is some indication that they may have been closely related to the secret societies. "They have tea ceremonies and swear allegiance one to the other, so that in the future they would have allies in the event of a dispute. This fraternity (bang) and that faction (pai) come to the union with their gang, and several days later, the matter is still not settled." Liu exhorts them, "We are all brothers (xiungdi)!" (Liu, 1958: 8).

In view of its preindustrial origins, it is not surprising to find that the contract labor system carried over many traditional concepts and practices. That there was supposed to be a moral relationship between the contractor and the worker is suggested by Yuan Pingao's defense of his contractor, "He emphasizes loyalty and generosity and helps people go to college" (Yuan Pingao, 1959: 157-161), and by Zhang Guotao's remark, "[The contractors] no longer talk about righteous principles with disciples and grand disciples or treat them as brethren" (Chang Kuo-t'ao, 1971: 173). Festivals, celebrations, and mourning periods were all occasions that required the workers to present gifts to the contractor (Chang Kuo-t'ao, 1971: 172), and the contractor generally supplied the worker with a New Year's bonus (Chesneaux, 1968: 91). If a worker was killed on the job, the contractor supplied the casket (Torgasheff, 1930: 536).

That the contract labor system itself became an issue in the September 1922 strike was not because the workers instinctively rejected the system. Although they might sometimes resent contractors, they tended to look at them as patrons (Yuan Pingao, 1959: 157-161). As the following account will indicate, the workers' initial grievance was simply that they had not been paid. The company owed them (and their contractors) back wages. It appears that the issue of the contract labor system was interjected by Communist organizers. Liu Shaoqi and Zhu Shaolian, in their report of the strike,<sup>6</sup> focused on two problems: that the contractors took an unreasonable percentage of the workers' wage for their services, in particular, and corruption, in general.

There were over 400 contractors at the Anyuan mines. According to Liu and Zhu, the contractors were paid 0.27 or 0.28 silver yuan (worth about 57 coppers in Anyuan) per worker per day. They in turn paid each of the workers about 26 or 27 coppers per day,



thus holding back over half of the worker's wage. In addition, they made money by paying workers in the inflated copper currency, instead of in silver, which the contractors received from the company. If a worker made less than one silver yuan, he was paid in copper, and whenever the wage was more than an even amount of silver yuan, again they paid the additional amount in copper. Deductions were made for the workers' food and lodging, and occasionally fines were assessed for mistakes or insubordination. If a contractor had loaned a worker money, he could pay himself back the amount plus any interest before paying the worker the remainder of his wages. Furthermore, the contractors were usually collecting for thirty men, and only hiring twenty. In this manner the average contractor received an income of approximately 700 or 800 silver yuan a month (Liu and Zhu, 1958: 4-5). Once a year the company also awarded bonuses to the contractors according to the quantity and quality of the coal produced ("Pingsiang Colliery," 1916: 377).

These contractors were supervised by overseers who were part of the mining office staff. The official monthly salary of an overseer was usually about 150 silver yuan, while that of the head overseer was about 300 silver yuan ("Johnson Memorandum," HC, Box 7, Pkg. VIII, Pt. 2, Item 16). These men might also receive a rake-off from the workers' wages, usually in the form of payments from the contractors. These payments ensured the contractors' jobs. The head overseer was widely reported to make anywhere from 2,000 to 3,000 yuan every month (Shiyeh zazhi [September 1922], "Local News," p. 8; Li Rui, 1958: 180).

Liu also enumerated several ways in which the contractors and staff enriched themselves at the expense of the company (Liu and Zhu, 1958: 5). The first was known as "selling air." The supervisors who recorded the production figures for each contractor would, for a price, add on a few extra tons. Another was called "making pits." The mines were known to have problems with flooding and sagging, and the overseers and contractors would inflate their reported costs with regard to material (lumber) and labor. In fact, after labor, lumber was the most expensive item on the company's Anyuan ledger (Hsieh, 1926: 44-46). The third method was known as "selling ashes." The company had set up a chemical examination checkpoint to determine the phosphorous content of the ore. If the phosphorous content was low, the contractor got a bonus; if it was high, he got a deduction. If the contractor

failed to bribe the chemist, the chemist would claim to have found a particularly high phosphorous content in the contractor's ore (Liu and Zhu, 1958: 5). Li Rui estimated that each staff member received about 100 yuan every month through these bribes (Li Rui, 1957: 180).

### *THE ARRIVAL OF COMMUNIST ORGANIZERS*

Student organizers first arrived in Anyuan in September 1921, only two months after the founding of the Communist Labor Secretariat. Mao Zedong and five others, including the anarchists Huang Ai and Pang Renquan, paid a short visit to Anyuan under the pretext of touring the mines. They had an introduction from railroad workers in Changsha and Zhuzhou (Li Rui, 1957: 179). The painting current during the Cultural Revolution, in which Mao was depicted in a blue scholar's gown, carrying a broken umbrella, as he reaches the summit of a hill, is a representation of this visit.

The group remained in Anyuan for one week, engaging the workers in conversation and surveying their living and working conditions. They also handed out literature — the Gongren zhouban (Workers' Weekly) and other labor news — and pasted up wall papers in the neighborhood of the mines (Lin and Zhu, 1958: 6).

The reaction of the workers, according to much later reminiscences, seemed to be primarily amazement at the idea that students were interested in workers and that students desired to live at a level comparable to that of the workers. Their reminiscent comments are filled with descriptions of the students' unassuming manner and spartan living standards, including their clothing, their food, and the meager accommodations upon which they insisted ("Anyuan kuan shi pianduan," HQPP Vol. XII (May 1959): 147-170).

The Mechanics' Union was actually the first organization to found a group at Anyuan. It organized a branch there that same September, with 200 members, both employees from the mines and from the railroads. However, membership in the union was restricted to machinists, and thus the great majority of workers at Anyuan were ineligible. In December 1921, the Mechanics' Union sent a letter to Mao asking the Labor Secretariat to send more organizers to Anyuan. Mao, Li Lisan, Song Yousheng, and Zhang Liquan went to Anyuan to look into starting activities there, and Li Lisan was sent alone in January 1922 (Liu and Zhu, 1958: 6-7).<sup>7</sup>

Li Lisan, the first Communist organizer to actually live in Anyuan, had been expelled from France some three months before for participating in a student occupation of a university building (Klein and Clark, 1971: 512). He was a native of Liling, Hunan, the xian directly west of Pingxiang, Jiangxi, through which the Zhuzhou-Pingxiang Railroad passed. The son of an impoverished school teacher, Li had had seven years of schooling in Liling and Changsha before going to France as a work-study student. He attended the College de Montargis and St. Charmond, where he was active in socialist study groups and other student activities. In fact, he had joined the CCP in France. Li had worked in an iron factory in France, and thus had some contact with European workers and unions.<sup>8</sup>

Li is often described as an energetic person with great forensic talent (Liu, 1968: iv). From 1928 until 1930 he headed the CCP, and pursued what was later called the Li Lisan line, an attempt to reestablish an urban Communist base. Maoists objected to this line as unrealistic and counterproductive, but it was a group of young men trained in Russia (and usually referred to as the Twenty-eight Bolsheviks) who actually unseated Li. In spite of the differences he had with the Maoist leadership and his fall from grace in 1930, he frequently is mentioned in positive ways by workers in post-49 reminiscences. Workers obviously liked him (Snow, 1952: 85), even though Zhang Guotao has described him as too impulsive, an agitator who required the steadying hand of more stolid personalities such as Liu Shaoqi (Liu, 1968: iv).

Very little has yet been uncovered about Li's intellectual development before 1922, except that he was deeply influenced by the revolutionary activities of such Tongmeng hui members as Qiu Jin and Xu Xilin. An older schoolmate of his and a member of the Tongmenghui, Sun Xiaoshun, introduced Li to the policies of the Tongmeng hui shortly before the Revolution of 1911 (Klein and Clark, 1971: 512). Li met Mao for the first time in 1917 when they were both students in Changsha (Schram, 1969: 37), but their friendship did not develop at that time.

It was the mass education movement, which had many prominent supporters among Changsha's reformist elite, that provided Li's initial cover in Anyuan. Mao sent him there with instructions to start a school for workers and from it to organize a union, to try to build a legal workers' movement. Mao is reported to have said, "Just say that you are a teacher and that you are setting up a

workers' night school to teach the workers to read and write, and you will be welcome" (Li Rui, 1957: 181-182). Thus, before he left Changsha, Li went to the Popular Education Society (Pingmin jiaoyu hui) to get credentials from Li Liuru ("Diyisuo gongren xuexiao," 1959: 166). (This office was most likely related to the "Board of Education" set up by Lo Jiaoduo and Zhou Fang of the Strengthen Learning Society.) Li proceeded directly to the district magistrate's office in Pingxiang, and obtained permission to set up a school. The magistrate put out an official letter approving the school and the program (Li Rui, 1957: 182). Mao had also given Li a letter of introduction to an employee at the railroad office, Zhou Jingxian, and Li contacted him as well ("Diyisuo gongren xuexiao," 1959: 167).

Li began his night school in the home of a worker named Zhang Zimin on Five Fortunes Lane. Li posted the permit that the local district magistrate had given him, along with a number of advertisements, near the mines ("Diyisuo gongren xuexiao," 1959: 167). Shortly thereafter Mao sent Cai Zengzhun to help him, and Cai brought with him mimeographed literacy material prepared by Li Liuru ("Diyisuo gongren xuexiao," 1959: 167; Li Rui, 1957: 167).

The school was not an immediate success. Miners were too wrapped up in the struggle for existence to see any purpose in going to school. Some who had had bad experiences with stern village schoolmasters were reluctant to try again ("Diyisuo gongren xuexiao," 1959: 167; Yuan Pingao, 1959: 157-161). Most of the original eight or nine students were railroad workers and thus probably had had some technical schooling in the past. This was certainly true of one of the first students, Zhu Shaolian. Zhu was a graduate of the Hengshan Middle School and had also attended the Hubei Railroad School (Liu and Zhu, 1958: 4). One of the few miners who joined early was Cai Shufan, and he had been to school for a few years in Anyuan. Both his father and uncle were experienced miners. It would appear that those who already had at least a little education were the first to be attracted by the school ("Diyisuo gongren xuexiao," 1959: 167; Snow, 1952: 83).

The school provided an excellent means of organizing labor, both because it gave the Communist students an excuse for being around the workers and because of the information they could obtain. After the school was set up, Li Lisan spent so much time going in and out of the dormitories trying to recruit students that he acquired the nickname Wandering Teacher ("Diyisuo gongren

xuexiao," 1959: 168). And he urged the core group that had come from the beginning to help him recruit others. Whenever a new prospect showed up, the cadres would inquire about certain organizationally interesting data — where a man worked, what his wages were, how many were in his family, and basically how he was managing (Yuan Pingao, 1959: 157-161).

It was not long before there were sixty or so students in class every night — many of them railroad employees (Liu and Zhu, 1958: 7). On March 16, the first preparatory meeting for the Anyuan Miners and Railroad Workers' Club was held, during which Li Lisan was nominated director. On April 1, there was another meeting, and Li Lisan, Zhu Shaolian, and about ten others signed a petition to register the club with the district magistrate in Pingxiang, requesting his protection, "which they humbly received." The club then moved into new and larger quarters at 52 Ox Horn Lane, where they set up a school room, a library, and a recreation center ("Diyisuo gongren xuexiao," 1959: 169).

On May 1, 1922, the Anyuan Miners and Railroad Workers' Club was officially founded. Li Lisan was elected director and Zhu Shaolian, vice-director. It had a membership of 300 (Li Rui, 1957: 183). According to Liu and Zhu, in its early days the club still did not "grow by leaps and bounds." The main themes in its propaganda were too idealistic, and it "did not speak to the personal interests of the workers. But after that, when slogans such as 'Create a consumer cooperative so we can get cheap goods' were used, more workers joined up" (Liu and Zhu, 1958: 7).

As the number of club members grew and the level of instruction advanced, Mao sent additional cadres to Anyuan. Jiang Xianyun arrived in May 1922 after the official founding of the club. Jiang was born in Hengyang xian, Hunan, where he had attended Third Normal School. A prominent student leader during the May Fourth movement, he had been one of the first that Mao recruited into the Party branch in Hengyang (Li Rui, 1957: 212-214).<sup>9</sup>

### *THE STRIKE*

The mining and railroad offices seem to have ignored the club until a July 1922 strike at the Hanyang Ironworks. Like the Anyuan mines, the Hanyang Ironworks was one corner of the Hanyeping triangle. Communist students from the Hubei Party branch had organized a workers' club there not unlike the one at Anyuan. The

Hanyang strike alerted the Hanyeping Company to the troublemaking potential of such clubs, and the management at Anyuan wanted to shut it down, or at least defuse it. Aware that the Hanyang strike had been precipitated by an attempt to close the club there, they moved cautiously.

One of the staff officers at the mine, Shu Chusheng, offered to give the club regular subsidies and a building. The club leaders turned him down and issued a public statement: "Manager Shu has come to our club. Even he cannot afford to ignore us! Now it is obvious that we are a perfectly legitimate organization" (Liu and Zhu, 1958: 8).

Tension ran high during the summer, primarily because the companies had not paid the workers for several months ("Zhongguo de Mosike," 1951: 58). One worker told of a meeting at which everyone was making comments like, "If they don't pay us soon, we'll all starve to death. The club has got to do something about it." Mao, however, who had arrived from Changsha, endorsed the suggestion of a worker that the club wait until it was stronger before taking action ("Mao zhuxi zai Anyuan de shihou," HQPP Vol. XII: 147-148).

Since Manager Shu's attempt to reach an accommodation with the club had failed, he signed a joint petition with the manager of the Railroad Office, Xu Haibo, addressing the district magistrate in Pingxiang and the defense commissioner for western Jiangxi. The petition stated that the club was an instrument of sedition and disorder and asked that it be closed down by military means (Liu and Zhu, 1958: 8).

On September 7, Xiao Anguo moved his troops into Pingxiang, and the railroad and mining companies took the offensive. Xu Haibo happened to have been a schoolmate of Zhu Shaolian and went to talk with him. Zhu claims that Xu warned him that things were going to get bad, and that he had better leave, or he might be killed. On the following day, Shen Kaiyun, the head of the mining office, went to the club to talk to Jiang Xianyun and Cai Zengzhen. Liu and Zhu state that these staff members were trying to scare the club's leadership away, hoping that the club would then collapse. But the club leaders announced, "For a just and noble cause, one engages in just and noble work, and even death holds no fear." On

September 9, Li Lisan returned from a trip to Changsha, and he too swore that he would not leave Anyuan (Liu and Zhu, 1958: 8).

Thus the club and the two companies were already on a collision course when yet another young Communist organizer appeared on the scene. Liu Shaoqi arrived sometime in September 1922, shortly before the strike.<sup>10</sup> Liu was the son of a peasant landowner and school teacher. After receiving a classical education at home, he attended middle school in Changsha. In 1918 he went to Shanghai, and in 1920 enrolled in a Russian-language class to prepare himself for study in the Soviet Union. The language class was under Comintern auspices, and Liu explained that when he entered the class, "I only knew that socialism was good, had heard about Marx and Lenin, and the October Revolution, and the Bolshevik Party, but I was not clear what socialism was, [or] how it could be realized" (SCMM No. 2398: 31).

In 1921 Liu and seven other students were sent to study at the Communist University of the Toilers of the East in Moscow. Liu described this trip as being rather dismal. Russia had still not recovered from civil war, and Liu found himself chopping logs along the railroad across Siberia to provide fuel for the train. His comment was, "Some of us wavered in [our] confidence in socialism on this account, but the rest of us found our confidence in socialism further strengthened" (SCMM No. 2398: 31).

After joining the CCP in Moscow, he returned to Shanghai in 1922 and worked with Zhang Guotao in the Labor Secretariat headquarters. Zhang has described Liu as bookish, taciturn, thoughtful, and persevering. "Some people," Zhang said, "found him a bit too glum and devoid of youthfulness."<sup>11</sup> This serious young man of twenty-four arrived in Anyuan at a point of crisis.

On September 9 the Guangzhou-Hankou railroad workers had gone out on strike. (In spite of its name, this railroad only ran from Hankou to Zhuzhou.) Because this railroad was directly linked with the one that led from Zhuzhou to Anyuan, the two companies at Anyuan moved immediately to prevent a strike at the mine and on the local railroad. They reversed their decision to use the military to close down the Anyuan club and went to Li Lisan. They told him that he should ignore the order which would be coming from the district magistrate to close down the club and promised that they would personally ask for the legal protection of the club (Liu and Zhu, 1958: 8).

The club leadership took this opportunity to put forward three

demands. The first two were precisely what the companies had already offered them: legal recognition and a subsidy. The third was that all back wages be paid. Threatening to go on strike if the demands were not met, they gave the companies two days to reply (Liu and Zhu, 1958: 8).

The reply was not long in coming. The two companies agreed to the first two demands again, but claimed that, owing to financial difficulties, they could not pay the back wages. For reasons not explained, however, the workers did not carry out their threat to strike. Rather, the club leadership extended the deadline (Liu and Zhu, 1958: 9; Li Rui, 1957: 184). (During the Cultural Revolution, Liu Shaoqi was blamed for the failure of the club to carry out its threat to strike [ "Chairman Mao at the Anyuan Colliery in 1921," 1968: 30].)

Then two things happened which appear to have reversed the decision to wait. News came of the September 10 incident on the Guangzhou-Hankou Railroad. Workers had been lying on the rails to prevent the trains from moving, and soldiers had opened fire, killing ten and wounding twenty. Many others drowned when they tried to escape by leaping into a nearby river (Chesneaux, 1968: 191). The Anyuan workers reacted with anger. In addition, instructions came from outside urging them to strike. The Labor Secretariat sent a telegram, stating:

Request that you go all out to execute the final tactic. You must not be over-awed by the company offices. (Emphasis added.) Our spirit has its own value in the struggle. We die from being exploited, why not die in struggle so that death has its price, its value? You have our unlimited sympathy and we are planning the support effort (Liu and Zhu, 1958: 9).

Yet another telegram urging a strike arrived directly from Mao Zedong at the Hunan Labor Secretariat headquarters in Changsha. Mao offered two pieces of advice: maintain an implacable struggle through agitation among the workers, and obtain the widest possible public sympathy (Li Rui, 1957: 184).

On September 12, 1922, a meeting was called, during which Liu Shaoqi analyzed the situation. He made three major points. First, the class consciousness of the workers was at a high level; the club enjoyed great prestige among the workers, and most of them were organized. (Li Rui has estimated club membership in September as 7,000 [Li Rui, 1957: 183].) Second, China was in the midst of a strike wave which added impetus. Third, Liu calculated



that the mining and railroad offices were unprepared and split over tactics. The conclusion was to call a strike, and it was declared at midnight on September 13, 1922 (Liu and Zhu, 1958: 10).

The workers were ordered to stay in their dorms. At 3:00 a.m. the electric wires on Dong Ping Lane, the street where the mining office was located, were cut so that the coal cars could not move. The miners already in the pits came running out yelling "On Strike" and blocked the entrances to the pits with timbers, posted guards, and hung up a banner, "On Strike" (Liu and Zhu, 1958: 10). The coal cars were piled up at the mouths of the pits, and a tri-cornered flag was planted in the midst of them, declaring, "Before we were beasts, but now we are men" (Wuhan shijiguan Makesi-Liening zhuyi xuexiao, ed., 1951: 58). Propaganda teams went from dormitory to dormitory talking to the workers about the strike (Snow, 1952: 84). The coal-washing platforms, the machine shops, the repair shops, and the coking ovens all shut down, and everyone went back to the dorms (Liu and Zhu, 1958: 10).

The club ordered that one of the boilers and two of the electric generators be kept operating. The boiler supplied the water and air systems in the mine. If the water pumps were shut down, the mine would flood, and without the air system, the pits might catch on fire. The generator not only supplied electricity for the coal cars but also power for the whole town of Anyuan, including the electric lights and the pumps which brought in the drinking water at the dormitories (Liu and Zhu, 1958: 10).

Negotiations began on the fourteenth, the first day of the strike. Xie Lanfang, representing the local Merchants' Association, and Chen Shengfang, a local scholar, came to the club, offering to be mediators (Liu and Zhu, 1958: 15). They were given a list of seventeen demands:

- 1) The club shall become a union. The railroad and mining offices shall recognize the right of the union to represent the workers in negotiations.
- 2) In the future, the two offices must have the agreement of the union in order to fire a worker.
- 3) Beginning this month, the two offices shall adopt the seven day week and shall no longer use the ten day week for the purposes of determining the one day off per week.
- 4) In the future, the two offices shall pay wages as usual on legal holidays and during leaves for sickness, weddings, and funerals.
- 5) In December of every year, the two offices shall give the workers a bonus.
- 6) With regard to workers who lose their lives in the course of duty, the two companies shall provide a coffin of the very best quality, and shall pay an in-

demnity equal to three years pay, in a lump sum.

7) With regard to workers injured in the course of duty, the two companies shall assume the responsibility of providing for them as long as they live, and shall pay them, monthly, a sum based on their wage.

8) The accumulated back wages of the workers must be paid immediately by the two companies, in a lump sum.

9) The two companies must continue to pay the wages of the workers during the strike period.

10) The two companies must give the lumberyard behind the railroad station and the large yard in front of the South Station Police Precinct to the workers for the construction of their facilities. Moreover, they must contribute 10,000 yuan to the building fund, and, beginning this month, contribute 200 yuan monthly as a subsidy.

11) In the future the foremen and supervisors shall be forbidden to beat the workers.

12) The wages of all workers who work inside the shafts shall be increased by 50 percent.

13) With regard to additions to or replacements of the foremen inside the shafts, the two companies shall promote the shift managers who work in the shafts according to their qualifications, and the supervisors may not make such decisions by themselves.

14) Real improvements shall be made on the dormitories of those who work inside the shafts, and no more than thirty-eight people may be housed in one section.

15) The coal washing platforms shall be managed in the same manner as before. There shall be three shifts per day, of eight hours each. The wages shall not be reduced, even though the hours will be shortened.

16) The workshop and machine shop shall be converted from a system of contract labor to a daily wage system.

17) All workers, either on the railroad or at the mines, who now receive a daily wage of 40¢ or less, shall receive an increase of 10¢ (Liu and Zhu, 1958: 10-11).

These seventeen demands merit some examination. Most interestingly, there is no blanket demand for the abolition of the contract labor system. Contract labor is mentioned in only one demand, the sixteenth, which asks that machinists, that is, workers in workshops and machine shops, be removed from a system of contract labor to a daily wage system. This would appear to be simply a tidying up of the old system. Skilled machinists rarely were contract laborers anyway. Another possibility is that even though the term contract labor is used here, the demand might simply mean a change from piecework wages (a sort of contract) to hourly wages. Whatever it meant, it would not affect very many workers.

What is even more curious is the way in which the terms, the two offices or the two companies, are used in ten of the demands,

but not in the other seven. In some of the demands where it is used, the workers are asking for items that were traditionally provided by contractors — paid leaves, bonuses, coffins, firings, disability and death payments, and wages. Obviously, the club wanted to hold the companies responsible for what had been the responsibilities of contractors. On the other hand, the demand for a fifty percent increase in the wages of workers in the shafts (all of whom would have been contract laborers) does not mention either the contractors or the two companies. It simply says that the wages shall be increased. Since it does not mention the companies, which are mentioned in ten demands, the implication here is that the contractors would be responsible for increasing the workers' wages — that they would no longer be allowed to help themselves to half the amount which they were given to pay their workers. This demand, coupled with the demands that the companies assume responsibilities for items that had been the responsibility of contractors, clearly would have reduced the power of the contractors considerably and turned them into little more than paymasters. Thus the club did not ask for the abolition of the system, but did demand an end to some of the abuses of the system, did demand, in some instances, that the companies assume new responsibilities, and most significantly, did demand that the club, as a union, represent the workers. Traditionally, the contractors had been the middlemen between the companies and the workers, but now the club was asking for that role. Thus, these seventeen demands did challenge the contract labor system in fundamental ways, but left the basic question of what would become of the contractors up in the air.

That same afternoon, the fourteenth of September, the companies replied in writing:

The two companies acknowledge the receipt of all the demands put forward by the workers. However, at this point it is impossible to carry them out. We request that you first encourage the men to return to work, and then we can discuss the items at leisure (Liu and Zhu, 1958: 15).

The workers replied, also in writing:

The workers' hopes lie in solving problems in their lives right now. If the two companies do not send representatives with plenipotentiary powers to negotiate these items, and if they continue to reply with ridiculous and empty words, we are truly afraid that these problems will never be solved (Liu and Chu, 1958: 15).

On the fifteenth, the two companies did send plenipotentiary re-

representatives to negotiate, and the club director, Li Lisan, also went. But the companies maintained their position that the workers must first return to work before they would negotiate. The workers' representatives rejected this, and no progress was made (Liu and Zhu, 1958: 15).

On the morning of the sixteenth, a letter came from the gentry, merchants, and educational circles urging the workers to go back to work and then talk about the demands. The workers replied that unless the demands were recognized, there was no point in talking. At the same time, they issued the following proclamation:

Elders! Brother! Rice is expensive. Cloth is expensive. Most of us — miners — only get twenty some coppers a day. If we buy clothes, we go hungry. If we eat, we have no clothes to wear. If we have parents or wives and children, we must starve! We cannot work on empty stomachs, and therefore we are demanding a wage increase. We cannot work naked, and so we are demanding a wage increase. If the two companies would only conserve a little on their tobacco, wine, and banquet expense accounts, we could have our increase. We have been on strike several days now, and still they will not listen to reason. Are they not forcing us down the road of starvation?

The life we lead is, in truth, not even human. It is the life of beasts of burden and slaves. Every day we work some dozen or so hours in the dark, under the earth. We are beaten and cursed by everyone. We are despised. We are no longer willing to endure such an inhuman life, and therefore we are going to improve our conditions. We have been on strike several days now, and still they will not listen to reason. Are they not forcing us down the road of starvation?

If the mining and railroad offices want to force us to die, we have no choice. More than twenty thousand workers are ready to die! Can you bear to watch us die, without trying to save us?

The demands which we have put before the mining and railroad companies are the only way for us to save our lives. If our demands are not granted, there is no way out for us. We shall die waiting on them.

Elders! Brothers! More than twenty thousand workers are ready to die! Can you bear to watch us die, without trying to save us? (Liu and Zhu, 1958: 14).

That this proclamation got fairly wide distribution is evident from the fact that it was loosely quoted in the China Weekly Review of the Far East on September 30, 1922:

"We get only 200 cash a day. If we buy rice, we can afford no clothing. We have to be content either with hunger or nakedness or exposure. We work ten

hours a day in dark dungeons like animals, and are subject to flogging and scolding." These are the statements of some 20,000 workers of the Pingsiang Colliery and the Chuchow-Pingsiang Railway in a strike declaration this week. Seventeen demands were presented to the mining and railway authorities through the Mining and Railway Workmen's Club.... The demands include an increase in wages, superannuation arrangement, full pay when disabled and maintenance of the workmen's club ("News from Central China," China Weekly Review of the Far East, Vol. XXII, No. 5 [September 30, 1922], p. 168).

All available accounts of this strike indicate that the local management was either unwilling or unable to try to break it. The only overt attack on the club and the participating workers during the strike was organized by Wang Hongqing, the man who sat at the top of the contract network. Allegedly, he made several thousand yuan a month selling the job of foreman. He resorted to family ties, personal friendships, and money in an effort to recruit strikebreakers, and he even hired local mercenaries in an attempt to break the strike. But he did not succeed (Liu and Zhu, 1958: 12).

Meanwhile, the companies — the mining office in particular — were in an exposed and vulnerable position. The coal supply for the critical electric generator and boiler and thus the pumps that circulated water and air through the pits was almost exhausted (Liu and Zhu, 1958: 15). And some of the miners were threatening to stop the pumps (Snow, 1952: 84). On the seventeenth, therefore, the mine director, Li Jingcheng, agreed to discuss the substance of the demands, even though the workers were still on strike. He was then presented with thirteen "consolidated" demands. The wage demands all remained the same. The four items that had been omitted were: (1) the death benefit of a coffin and three years' pay; (2) the demand for the lumberyard and 10,000 yuan to construct a clubhouse on this land; (3) dormitory improvements; and (4) the demand to abolish the contract system in the machine shops and to pay those workers a daily wage instead (Chen Da, 1927: 236). Essentially, the club leadership had omitted one item which affected only the machinists, and three items that could be called fringe benefits.

On the morning of September 18, 1922, the three parties — the companies, the workers, and the mediators — signed the settlement (Liu and Zhu, 1958: 16). All thirteen of the consolidated demands were granted, with some revisions. The following changes were made:

1. In the second demand, the club had insisted on the right to

prevent the companies from firing workers without its permission. In the final agreement this was changed to read, "the company must publish the reason for firing a worker." Also added was a clause assuring the workers that they could not be fired for participating in the strike.

2. The third demand had asked for four holidays a month; this was cut down to only two Sunday holidays a month.

3. The original demand for one month's salary as an annual bonus was cut down to half a month's salary.

4. The seventh demand had been for the immediate payment of all back wages. The final agreement provided that the miners would receive full back pay within five months, while the railroad workers would receive theirs immediately.

5. Compensation to survivors in the event of a death was reinstated, after having been omitted in the consolidated demands.

6. The wage demands were overfulfilled. The contractors in the mines were now obligated to pay 33¢ a day to workers who had been receiving 15¢, and 52¢ a day to those who had been receiving 24¢, all of which, apparently, was to come out of the contractors' pockets. Workers who were not contract laborers, and who had been receiving 40¢ a day or less, were to receive an increase of 60¢, while those who were making more than 40¢ were to receive an increase equal to 50 percent of their previous pay (Chen Da, 1927: 237; Liu and Zhu, 1958: 15-16).

In short, the Anyuan Railroad Workers and Miners' Club, in only five days, had won the strike. There was no doubt that the mining and railroad companies had lost, but there was still one outstanding question: What would become of the contractors now that the companies had signed a contract with the club guaranteeing that the workers would receive over twice as much money, money that would come out of the contractors' pockets?

The four hundred contractors were not prepared to accept this situation, and they organized a Recreation Club in opposition to the Workers' Club. Assembling the unemployed workers in the area, workers who had been expelled from the Anyuan Workers' Club, and workers who had close ties of friendship or blood, they attempted to undermine the Workers' Club. According to Liu Shaoqi, one of their plans was to provoke another strike and then get members of the Recreation Club hired to replace the striking workers. These plans, however, were foiled, and the leadership of the Anyuan Workers' Club came to them with a compromise.

The Workers' Club offered to incorporate the contractors into a cooperative. The contractors would continue to collect the wage bill from the two companies, but instead of raking off as much as they could for themselves, as they had done before, they would now pay themselves a regular monthly salary of 10 to 13 yuan. They would also pay the workers under them at the new, higher rate. The money that was left over would be given to the cooperative. The cooperative's profits would be divided among both the contractors and the workers. Fifteen percent of this profit would be divided among the contractors, 5 percent would pay for the cooperative's management, and 80 percent would be divided among the workers. The contractors, in the end, agreed to this arrangement (Liu and Zhu, 1958: 20).

It would appear from the various accounts of this strike that the contract labor system was destroyed, not explicitly, but implicitly. And it was destroyed by the club, not by the companies. The club gained the confidence of the workers and thus broke the contractors' hold over them. It forced the companies to assume responsibility for the workers in some new areas, and the club itself assumed some functions that the contractors had served. And, in the end, the club incorporated the contractors into a cooperative that it controlled. In terms of both money and power, the contractors clearly lost more than the companies.

#### *POST-STRIKE DEVELOPMENTS*

The Anyuan Club leadership set about developing and practicing its managerial talents according to instructions from the Labor Secretariat headquarters. A 10-man team system was set up to manage the club. Each team had a representative-of-10, and every 10 teams had a representative-of-100. At every work site there was one general representative. These general representatives belonged to a General Congress of the Whole (Li Rui, 1957: 186).

The most complete list of officers available includes a general director, a director in charge of those working in the mines, a director in charge of those working outside the mines, a director in charge of railroad employees, a secretary, and heads of the education committee and the cooperative ("Zhongguo de Mosike," 1951: 59). All sources agree that Li Lisan was elected general director, that Zhu Jintang was director in charge of those working inside the

mines, and that Zhu Shaolian was the director in charge of railroad workers. Li Rui states that Liu Shaoqi was elected special emissary (Li Rui, 1957: 186), but another source states that he was director in charge of those working inside the mines. Committee directors named were Jiang Xianyun (secretary), Cai Zengzhun (education), and Yi Liren, Mao Zetan (Mao Zedong's younger brother), and Tang Shengchao (managers of the consumer cooperative) ("Zhongguo de Mosike," 1951: 59).

After its victory and reorganization, the Anyuan Railroad Workers and Miners' Club secured the first structure built for workers led by the Communist Party in China. Pooling a portion of their newly won wages, they financed the construction of a two-story clubhouse ("Zhongguo de Mosike," 1951: 59). Before the club's dissolution in 1925, it had 12,000 members, 7 night schools with about 2,000 students, 12 work site reading rooms, a women's education department, and a consumers' cooperative with capital of 13,000 one-yuan shares (Chesneaux, 1968: 285). In addition, there was an Arbitration Committee and an Inquiries Office, which settled disputes among the membership and between members and nonmembers, a matter that was to take up a great deal of the club's energy (Liu and Zhu, 1958: 25; Liu, 1958: 7).

The most controversial policy of the Anyuan club after the strike was an effort, clearly sponsored by Liu Shaoqi, to increase productivity. It was his hope that the company and the club could cooperate in an effort to increase the output of coal. Since imperialism was the main enemy, it was in everyone's interests to increase the productivity of a Chinese-owned mine, to strengthen China.

After the strike there was a meeting of the workers' representatives, the personnel from the mining offices, and the engineers, at which they discussed how to increase production. The company promised to repair shuttles and produce new ones, and the workers were exhorted by the club to work harder and to follow the "appropriate" instructions of the foremen and staff (Liu and Zhu, 1958: 24). "Arrogance" on the part of the workers was forbidden ([Yuan ?] Dashi, (1923?) HC, Box 6, Pkg. VII, Pt. 3, Folder 2, Item 3). And if anyone willfully broke the company rules and regulations, he was subject to discipline by the club (Liu and Zhu, 1958: 24).

Liu Shaoqi's lifelong preoccupation with discipline is best illustrated by his 1939 lecture, "How to Be a Good Communist," but one can discern the same concern for rules, regulations, and or-



ganization charts at Anyuan. Both of his 1923 articles deal with the union's administrative structure and the division of responsibilities among the leadership. In one report, he wrote thirteen dense pages explaining the responsibilities of each committee, where its members had fallen short, and how these shortcomings should be remedied. He criticized the Executive Committee for being too casual and unsystematic. He complained of an "anarchic" attitude at the cooperative store and wrote that the members of the Recreation Committee did not pay enough attention to policy. He warned the workers' elected representatives against resting on their laurels and expecting some kind of material reward for their services (Liu, 1958: 2-10).

Liu claimed in this report that the workers did not have good judgment and wanted to strike even when it was, in his opinion, unwise. In June 1923, for example, the company had raised the wages of some workers, but not others, and a demand arose from the workers for a general increase. The Hanyeping Company claimed that it could not afford a general increase and asked the club to settle the matter. At first reluctant, the club finally agreed. According to Liu, "Owing to the close relationship between the nation's industry, local law and order, and the future of the club, the club had to do the best it could to defuse the situation" (Liu and Zhu, 1958: 22).

Liu's emphasis on such national priorities and his empathy for the company's troubles inspired controversy not only during the Cultural Revolution but also in 1923 ("Chairman Mao at the Anyuan Colliery in 1921," 1968). It is clear from Liu Shaoqi's own report, "A Critique of the Club's Past and Plans for Its Future," that some workers were threatening to strike against him:

This infantile disorder — striking out blindly — is a serious mistake that some worker friends make. Wanting to call a strike every time there is some incident and demanding the reduction of working hours right now are both manifestations of this sort of infantile disorder. Given that China has such an infantile proletariat, we cannot indulge in adventurism and make direct confrontations and thus provoke an attack on the entire labor movement. . . . The strike is the workers' weapon, it is not a toy. It is to deal with the enemy, not with our own organization. . . . We must not take these weapons up to murder our own family members (Liu, 1958: 7-8).

The opposition to Liu Shaoqi's cautious stewardship of the club

also seems to have overlapped with another issue, one of personalities. Some workers were loathe to give up a previous leader and accept a new one:

We all believe in socialism — the ideology of the workers — that is the only reason that we have come to Anyuan to help everyone. We were sent here by the Labor Secretariat. By no means are we here chasing after individual fame or fortune. Since all of the workers trust that our work is intended to help everyone, they should believe that other people who believe in socialism who might come here to manage affairs also come to help everyone and not to hurt anyone. This is not to say that anyone should be trusted, but rather that socialists should be trusted. They must believe that all the people sent by the Labor Secretariat are the same sort. It is dangerous to trust a person without looking into his past and asking oneself why he is trusted, since one individual cannot attend to everyone and work for several decades or several centuries. Moreover, the worker must believe that his own organization is trustworthy and dependable, and he cannot forever depend on a single individual. I hope all the workers will trust anyone who is a socialist and trust in their own organization (Liu, 1958: 8).

There is further evidence that serious opposition to Liu Shaoqi existed, and that the individual upon whom the workers were placing undue reliance was Li Lisan. It comes from Cai Shufan, the miner who became a Red Army general. The following is from a 1937 interview done by Helen Foster Snow in Yanan.

... Li Li-san led this strike.... Li Li-san stayed at Hanyehping [Hanyeping] about three years, leaving for Shanghai about 1924. He had great influence among the workers. He was a student, but a good labor leader and unusually convincing agitator, influencing nearly everyone who heard him speak....

After this [strike] there were many civil wars in Hunan and the financing of the mine became difficult. The workers could not get regular wages, so they always sabotaged and made many demands on the owners. Then the son of Sun Hsien-huai [Sheng Xuanhuai] brought two regiments — about two thousand soldiers — to the mines and began discussions with the workers. The head of our Union was Lo Ch'en [Liu Shaoqi, it shall be argued], a Communist. He was a student, not a miner, but he was representing the workers, and the management treated him well. He had much faith in the capitalists, even though he was a Communist, but finally the discussions failed and none of our demands were granted. The whole labor movement of Anyang [Anyuan] soon failed (Snow, 1952: 85).

The Lo Ch'en whom Cai described in 1937 as having much faith in the capitalists was almost certainly Liu Shaoqi. Liu used an alias, Liu Ren 刘仁 (Zhonggong renming lu, 1967: entry under

Liu Shaoqi). Liu Ren could easily be transformed into Lo Ch'en [Luo Chen] in an interview, owing to the Hunanese accent and the nature of the Wade-Giles romanization system. The surname Liu is easily mistaken for the surname Lo by an American ear. With regard to the given name Ch'en (or Chen, in pinyin), Hunanese sometimes pronounce ren so that it sounds like zhen, which is written chen in the Wade-Giles system. If an apostrophe is then added due to uncertainty about whether it should be Chen or Ch'en, the transformation of Liu Ren into Lo Ch'en is complete. This reasoning is not too farfetched, for in this selection, Anyuan is romanized as Anyang, and 'Sun Hsien-huai (Sheng Xuanhua) should have been written Sheng Hsüan-huai in the Wade-Giles system. Furthermore, there were only three heads of the Anyuan Club during this period: Li Lisan, Liu Shaoqi, and Zhu Shaolian. Since Cai mentions both Li Lisan and Zhu Shaolian by name, by elimination, Lo Ch'en must be Liu Ren, that is Liu Shaoqi.

There remains the interesting question of why Cai Shufan would so openly criticize a fellow Party member. One possible explanation is that Cai Shufan did not know that Liu Shaoqi and Liu Ren were the same person. Liu Shaoqi did not go on the Long March. He was sent to try and organize the shattered Party underground, making his headquarters in Beijing and Tianjin. He joined the Central Committee at Yanan in 1937 and thus had only recently arrived in Yanan when Helen Foster Snow interviewed Cai Shufan (See Snow, 1968: 482-483). Or Cai may just have been being his own "frank, outspoken, critical, and hot-tempered self" (Snow, 1952: 83).

All sources agree, regardless of their political intent, that Liu wanted to emphasize those things that he thought would benefit both the workers and the companies. He hoped that by stressing the importance of discipline and hard work he could contain what he characterized as the volatile and irresponsible nature of the miners, and by eliminating the exploitation and corruption of the contract labor system, he could work out a mutually beneficial relationship. However, neither the workers nor the management ever fulfilled his expectations. In his opinion, some workers remained arrogant, too quick to anger, and too prone to strike (Liu, 1958: 4-11). His disappointment with regard to the companies is also clear.

As for our humble organization, ever since its founding we have always sought

the further development of the local industries, and therefore the benefits we have offered the companies are not few. Anyone with eyes can see, and yet the two companies want to get rid of us. By ourselves we are weak; nevertheless, self-defense is our last resort. The prosperity of the two companies, and the security of the local community, are closely related to the nation's future. For this reason, all of the publications and pronouncements of our humble club seek the future development of the railroad and mine. That the local offices of the two companies cannot understand this is most unfortunate (Liu and Zhu, 1958: 24).

The company, in fact, added insult to injury by blaming a decline in production on the club. In spite of the club's efforts, production fell from 827,870 tons in 1922 to 666,939 tons in 1923 (Hsieh, 1926: 14-15; Ting and Wong, 1921: 18). Liu insisted that it was not the club's fault:

The workers are not completely blameless. However, the primary reasons were that the workers lacked coal shuttles and materials and that the foremen and staff were not responsible with regard to their work. But, because the local office was afraid to assume responsibility for this, they blamed the club. Those who knew the situation at Anyuan knew that the charge was ridiculous, but those who did not, spread such stories (Liu and Zhu, 1958: 25).

#### *THE 1925 DEFEAT*

The Anyuan Workers' Club managed to survive for about two and one-half years after many of the unions of northern and central China were closed down following the February Seventh Incident in 1923. It thus earned the title of "Little Moscow" (Chesneaux, 1968: 221), and its organization was described as "a blend of a parliamentary system and a soviet system" (Deng, 1949: 114). Anyuan became a small enclave of Bolshevism. Cai Shufan claimed that there were, by 1925, 500 workers in the Anyuan chapter of the Socialist Youth Corps and 300 workers in the local branch of the Communist Party (Snow, 1952: 85).

Why Anyuan was able to escape the setbacks of 1923 is an interesting question. Some might suggest that its survival was due to the conciliatory policy of Liu Shaoqi, the emphasis on mutual interests shared by both the companies and the workers. This, however, does not appear to have been a significant factor. The companies were not convinced, as Liu Shaoqi himself admitted. In fact, instructions had come down in 1923 from the Ministry of Communications in Beijing ordering the local mining office to close down the Anyuan Workers' Club. The local office, however,

did not make any serious attempt to carry out this order. Coal production was too critical, and the local management feared that any attempt to shut it down would result in a serious blow to the industry and to local law and order (Liu and Zhu, 1958: 21). Since they were somewhat removed from the centers of political and military power, they worried that they might be stranded in hostile territory, besieged by thousands of angry miners.

Even though the order from the Ministry of Communications had been ignored, the owners of the company in Shanghai did not give up. Sheng Xuanhuai's son, Sheng Enyi, was in favor of military suppression. In 1923 the Shanghai headquarters asked the Jiangxi warlord Cai Chengxun to send troops and also telegraphed the defense commissioner for western Jiangxi, "The situation at the Pingxiang mines is getting more and more critical. The company is losing out. Request that you proceed immediately and take over the situation." The Jiangxi warlord, however, was not sufficiently concerned to risk the political and military complications that the forceful occupation of the mines might entail (Liu and Zhu, 1958: 23-24).

The local staff was frightened and the provincial authorities offered little help. That the Anyuan club was a political problem for the Hunanese government is quite evident, for its influence spread along the railroad, to Zhuzhou and Changsha, and along the Xiang River to Shuikoushan, all in Hunan. But it does not seem to have affected the situation in Nanchang. The Hunan warlord Zhao Hengti had no jurisdiction, and the Jiangxi warlord had no cause, and thus the Anyuan club continued to flourish.

This situation persisted until 1925, by which time the club had attracted national, and even international, attention. Shortly after a slowdown in February 1925, owing to the nonpayment of wages (HC, Box 7, Pkg. VIII, Pt. 2, attached to item 16), an American consul who appears to have spent a good deal of his time in China investigating leftist activities, J. Calvin Huston, visited the mine and confirmed that the local management remained demoralized and indecisive. In a letter dated April 23, 1925, Huston wrote to Chen Da, a contemporary labor specialist, "I have just returned from the Pinghsiang mines at Anyuan . . . . The technical staff, all of whom are Chinese are very much discouraged. They are completely under the power of the union . . ." (HC, Box 6, Pkg. VII, Pt. 3, Folder 2, Item 8). While at the mine, Huston had struck up an acquaintance with the chief mechanical engineer, Dr. Li Fo Ki.

They seem to have shared an interest not only in labor questions, but in hypnosis as well. In exchange for a book on Houdini, Dr. Li sent Huston copies of the various agreements signed between the companies and the club and a statement of his own views about labor management (HC, Box 7, Pkg. VIII, Pt. 2, attached to Item 16). That the Anyuan Workers' Club had Li befuddled is apparent from the incoherence of his reply:

As no industry in China can boast of an absolute scientific organization, to protect it from worse consequences a certain contract system would be undoubtedly a safe proposition for a big enterprise. Either to fabricate articles or bring forth natural resources, one must rely on "give and take" conditions. Professional abilities of course are necessary. The Revolution of 1911 made it more so.

On the other hand, the nation should make it its duty to be ready in action, such that any breach in the carrying out of contracts between the capitalists and the workers can be given an equitable settlement. Results have been successful in the majority of disputes in Europe, America, and Australia. Arbitration in an advanced court, Chinese workers are not ripe for it; in fact no workman in the world over is ripe for it. Arbitration consisting of absolute pressure must be understood as an entirely different thing! Military control, even in the well organized countries has shown deficits in all cases, so it will not do either among the home undertakings.

Human nature and common sense be the things and as mathematicians say, infinity is infinity, no number can be assigned to equal it, but a number can be made as large a value to approach it. May contract system approach nearest human nature and common sense, with a government to supervise it (HC, Box 7, Pkg. VIII, Pt. 2, attached to item 16).

In his covering letter, Dr. Li tried to make his point somewhat clearer:

Suffice it to say that analysis and synthesis need go back at least fifteen years to arrive at a tolerable basis — but one can't expect that labor profiteering and unsteady government may be handled in the medieval way, waiting for Providence to pity and send help, particularly in our case with its awful history of its recent four years everyone is aware of (HC, Box 7, Pkg. VIII, Pt. 2, attached to Item 16).

In June 1925 the club organized a Committee for Effacing Shame after the May Thirtieth Incident (Chesneaux, 1968: 285) and in September it went out on strike, once again over the nonpayment of wages. According to the American consul in Changsha, the managing director of the Hanyeping Company in Shanghai, Sheng Enyi,

insisted, again, that the club had to be destroyed (HC, Box 6, Pkg. VII, Pt. 2, Folder 3, Item 1). And, according to the consul, the Shanghai company headquarters decided this time to pay two Jiangxi commanders, Fang Benren and Li Hongcheng, to do the job. Since the consul was citing what he referred to as "one of the most authoritative leaflets" with regard to this bribery, it is not an established fact. On the other hand, whether or not the bribery could be proved, it is significant that it was alleged and generally believed, for this allegation reveals the general perception that the Jiangxi authorities generally maintained an indifferent attitude toward the club.

When the military did go in and occupy the mine on September 21, they arrested and imprisoned twenty-four of the club's teachers and then on October 16 took out the highest ranking club officer they had, Huang Jingyuan, and shot him in front of the club (HC, Box 6, Pkg. VII, Pt. 2, Folder 3, Item 1). More than ten workers were beaten to death or severely injured, and more than 5,000 workers were fired and forced to leave Anyuan. In the end, the mine had to be closed down in order to destroy the club (Li Rui, 1957: 189). That the club survived as long as it did seems to have been more related to its relative isolation and the local staff's fear of disorder than to any particular policy on the part of the club's leadership. The strategic advantage of the mountainous border area, an old Chinese truth well known to secret societies and bandits, was once again demonstrated.

There is no question that the Anyuan Club was a strong union. Nine months of careful preparation lay behind the successful strike of September 1922. By breaking the power of the contractors, no mean feat, the club had doubled the workers' wages. This was no "paper union" that survived until 1925. Former members of the Anyuan Workers' Club were to be among the Communists at the Whampoa Military Academy, the Peasant Movement Training School, and the Political School in Guangdong after 1925. They have also been identified as participants in the Northern Expedition, the Autumn Harvest Uprising, and the Nanchang Uprising. In 1928 the Hunan Provincial Committee of the Party was located temporarily at Anyuan, and after Mao established his base area in the Jinggang Mountains, Anyuan became a relay center for communications with the outside and with the Party center. Party documents and cadres passed through Anyuan when entering or leaving the Soviet areas. In 1930 over 1,000 Anyuan workers joined the

Red Army. The survivors went on the Long March and fought in the Anti-Japanese War (Li Rui, 1957: 189-190).

Furthermore, there is no indication that the club's power was in anyway linked to the liberal reformers in Hunan. While it is true that Li Lisan arrived with the endorsement of the mass education movement, Hunanese liberals were in no position to aid the club once the local authorities turned against it. Nor does the gentry, merchant, and educational elite of Pingxiang xian, whose members came in as mediators in the strike negotiations, seem to have played an important role. The power of the club grew out of its control over the workers and their ability to shut down the mine. The defeat of the union in 1925 was not an indication of a poorly organized union with no significant following. It was simply an indication that unarmed workers could not defeat a concerted military effort to assault and occupy a mine.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> One author also stated that the coal was moved by railroad all the way from Zhuzhou to Wuchang (Hoyt, 1923: 316-317).

<sup>2</sup> Liu Anyi, a peasant who lived near Hengshan, was visiting their homes shortly after the strike. After 1923 he became a peasant organizer, and was said to have widely publicized the "help given poor people" by Liu Shaoqi and Li Lisan at Anyuan. (Hunan geming lieshi zhuan, 1952: 113-114).

<sup>3</sup> In Beijing the price of rice had doubled between 1902 and 1919. The price of ordinary cloth had risen from 5 cash to 70 cash. Prices for Hankow are not given until 1919, at which point they are very similar to those in Beijing. Both in Beijing and in Hankou the prices continued to rise rapidly. Between 1919 and 1922, the price of cotton doubled (Heintzleman, "Labor Conditions in the Hankow Consular District," in U.S. Government, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of China, 1910-1929, Doc. No. 893,504/77, p.4).

<sup>4</sup> When Cai was interviewed at Yanan, he was a commissar of the Red Army. After he left Anyuan he organized workers at an arsenal in Nanchang and in Wuhan. He then studied for a few years in Moscow, where he married a Russian woman. When he died in 1958, he was a member of the Central Committee. He was killed in a plane crash on his way to the Soviet Union (see Snow, 1968: 349, 502).

<sup>5</sup> Xie returned to Anyuan to assist Zhu Shaolian in organizing the miners for the Autumn Harvest Uprising. He was arrested and executed in January 1928 (see Li Rui, 1958: 213).

<sup>6</sup> Liu and Zhu's short history of the Anyuan union most likely was written in the late summer of 1923. It was originally published by the Anyuan Miners and Railroad Workers' Club in Anyuan on August 10, 1923. It was reprinted in HNLSZL in 1958. Liu Shaoqi was the head of the union at the time the report was written. Zhu Shaolian was a skilled railroad worker. He had gradu-



ated from the Hengyang Middle School and had also attended the Hubei Railroad School. An officer of the Anyuan Workers' Club until 1925, he returned there in 1927 to lead a detachment of miners in the Autumn Harvest Uprising. He was arrested and executed in Pingxiang in 1928. See the introduction to Liu and Zhu, 1958: 4.

<sup>7</sup> Li Rui does not mention this December trip to Anyuan or that three months elapsed between the time that Mao first went to Anyuan and when the Secretariat actually went out to investigate starting activities there. Nor does he mention that it was a request from the Mechanics' Union that prompted Mao to send Li Lisan.

<sup>8</sup> The biographical information for Li Lisan was drawn from Klein and Clark, 1971; Harrison, 1960: 7-8; Boorman, 1968: II, 310-312; Who's Who in Communist China, 1966: 350-353; and Strong, 1935: 90-91.

<sup>9</sup> Later Jiang was sent to the lead and zinc mines at Shuikoushan, Hunan, to organize workers there. In 1923 he went to Guangdong where, in 1924, he joined the first class and distinguished himself at the Whampoa Military Academy. During the Northern Expedition, Jiang was a regimental commander in the Fourth Army. What might have been a notable career ended abruptly when he was killed on the Henan front of the Northern Expedition in 1927.

<sup>10</sup> The anti-Liu Cultural Revolution material states that Liu arrived in Anyuan on September 11, two days before the strike was called. See "Chairman Mao at the Anyuan Colliery in 1921," SCMM No. 634 (November 12, 1968). This article is a translation from Jiefangjun wenyi No. 6 (March 25, 1968). There is only a small problem with this date. The story called "Zhenli de qishi" in HQPP Vol. XII (May 1959): 157-161, indicates that Liu Shaoqi was teaching in the night school before the strike. The worker Yuan Pingao relates a rather long and complicated discussion with Liu that spanned at least several days' time. This would suggest that Liu was there before September 11. It is unlikely, however, that he was there very much before this date. Li Rui states that Mao sent Liu there "to secure victory in the struggle," referring to the upcoming strike (Li Rui, 1957: 184). Zhang Guotao, with whom Liu had been working that summer, also states that Liu went in September (see Zhang's introduction to Union Research Institute, Collected Works of Liu Shao-ch'i, 1968: iii).

<sup>11</sup> The quote is from Collected Works of Liu Shao-ch'i, 1968: iii. Biographical data on Liu also comes from Klein and Clark, 1971; Boorman, 1968: II; and Snow, 1945: 29.

## The Construction Workers' Strike

Changsha's construction workers before 1922 were not the most obvious target for Communist organizers. They were members of a traditional guild, and insofar as they had participated in politics, they had followed the lead of Hunan's most conservative elite. Most dramatically, they had led the mobs of the April 1910 Changsha Riot, during which all those structures that represented modernity were either vandalized or burned to the ground. In their minds the new provincial and local assemblies, the new schools, and the New Army were inseparable from the new taxes and the new presence of objectionable foreigners in Hunan. "The urban poor shared the conservatives' opposition to both reform and imperialism and were therefore willing to follow their lead. [They] would never have followed the reformers into battle" (Esherick, 1976: 136).

Yet Mao managed to recruit these hard hats into a Communist-led union. His opportunity came as a result of a long and usually quiet battle between the proponents of two different ways of organizing production: guild members and the new industrial captains of Europe, the advocates of free trade and free enterprise. In order to understand the nature of the opening that his battle left for Communist organizers, one must understand the guild and the challenges hurled against it by this revolutionary force.

### *THE GUILD*

The fundamental goal of a guild was to present a solid front to a potentially hostile world. In order to maximize cooperation and minimize competition among the skilled, guild members undertook to see that no outsider pursued their craft. In order to ensure that their own numbers expanded no more rapidly than the local market, they placed strict limits on the number of apprentices that could be

accepted. The guild also set high standards regarding apprenticeship training, raw materials, production, and marketing, for to allow one member to cut costs and lower his price was to allow him to compete unfairly for what was thought to be a set amount of business and thus profit (Morse, 1909: 3). Given their assumption that trade was a stagnant pool, if one member increased his share, another suffered, and such suffering could threaten the unity of the guild.

The ideological rationale holding such bodies together was none other than that strongest of Chinese glues, the family ethic. Just like families, the guilds had ancestors to whom they owed reverence. Construction workers considered themselves to be the descendants of Lu Ban, a mythologized historical personage who had lived, they believed, in the fifth century B.C. He was the founder, the original master of the craft, and thus the creator of this family (CEB, 1924: 1).

Families in China were hierarchical, and the patriarchs of this one were the guild masters. Only they were eligible to sit on the Board of Annual Directors, the body that controlled the construction industry. Masters were the only ones allowed to establish firms, to take on apprentices and then hire them as journeymen once they were trained. The apprentices were quite literally children, taken into the profession in order to ensure that there would be descendants, that their monopoly would be passed on to future generations (Li Rui, 1957: 80). In essence, they were adopted sons who were fed, clothed, and trained by their seniors. The journeymen's position was analogous to that of adult sons in an extended family, men who were quite competent in their own right, but sons still under the sway of an active father, the master.

Just as there were days on which a family assembled to venerate its ancestors, the successors of Lu Ban assembled at the temple once a year on the day believed to be his birthday. They paid their annual dues as they entered the innermost chamber, Five Harmonies Hall, and once inside, they bowed in homage and burned incense before their ancestor. The board then took attendance, led a discussion of the business, reviewed the guild's rules and regulations, and announced any penalties (usually fines) that were to be meted out to offenders. And the elders usually hired a company of players for the edification and entertainment of the members, after which they themselves sat down to a banquet.

The proprieties observed at this annual meeting mirrored the

power relationships that existed in the various masters' shops. Journeymen, who were usually consulted about major decisions within a firm, also could express themselves at the annual meeting. Apprentices, who mainly watched and learned in the shops, were mere bystanders at the meeting. They could not speak out, for they were not yet officially members. They were supposed to be grateful (and perhaps they were) simply because they could look forward to learning the guild's secrets and someday becoming a part of this monopoly on a livelihood (Burgess, 1928: 94-95).

That the masters led the procession that bowed before Lu Ban was not only a ritual enactment of their seniority, it was also an object lesson, a demonstration — put on for the benefit of the journeymen — of the attitude of respect and gratitude that they should display toward their own seniors, the contemporary wearers of Lu Ban's mantel. One's master had taught him the means by which to make his living, and thus he was as indebted to the master as he was to his parents who had bestowed his physical being upon him. This positive approach was complemented at the meeting by a negative incentive, the public distribution of punishments, a demonstration of the leaders' power.

The junior's feelings of gratitude toward and identification with his master were paralleled by the master's interest and pride in his own former students, the journeymen. Just as his sons were his genealogical successors, the journeymen were his professional successors, and their achievements or lack thereof reflected upon him. Furthermore, they might someday take on some of the most important functions of sons, for the guild often assumed financial responsibility for its members in sickness and old age. And the journeymen might in the end be responsible for the master's funeral.

Both the original and the dominant relationship between master and journeyman was that of teacher and student. This meant that conflicts between employer and employee were not so sharp as under the modern factory system. Outright disputes over wages were rare. When wage discussions did turn into heated debates, they were not unlike family quarrels (Burgess, 1928: 145-146), since journeymen could not leave one master and expect to find a sympathetic reception with another. Likewise, it would have been difficult for a master to replace his journeymen if they left him. He had invested years in their training and he needed them. But if discussion did not solve a problem, journeymen could coalesce

and make a united demand to the board, as a last resort. The directors, in such a case, could not resist with impunity, for if a protest created disorder or inconvenienced the public, it might attract the attention of the district magistrate. Because the leadership feared financial extortion or irregular taxation, they were usually anxious to settle disputes before they drew officials' attention to the guild (Morse, 1909: 32). The ability of journeymen to induce a favorable response from the guild over time had produced an expectation that the guild would keep wages in line with the cost of living (Burgess, 1928: 145-146). And it had produced an assumption that the guild masters had the best interests of the journeymen at heart, even if the latter sometimes had to resort to extraordinary means to make their grievances known. The dangers to one's livelihood did not come from within the guild, but from without.

#### *CHALLENGES TO THE GUILD SYSTEM*

Chinese guilds such as the Lu Pan Temple were hoary institutions. Since the latter part of the Tang dynasty (circa A.D. 750), they had been a powerful force in Chinese society. They had run their affairs basically unchallenged for over a thousand years before a new and subversive group showed up on the China coast in the early years of the nineteenth century, the free traders. These men came from a society in which guilds had long since succumbed to the economic and political forces of the industrial revolution. No sooner had these brash new men ended the last vestige of their own countrymen's monopoly — the British East India Company (abolished in 1834) — than they turned their attention to battering down the cohong (gong hang), a guild-like monopoly licensed by the Chinese government to trade with foreigners. Their efforts culminated in the First Opium War, which the Chinese lost. Chinese guilds did not give up the fight, however. Even though their nation had lost that war, they continued "the battle with the silent and more effective weapons of the craft gild and the provincial club" (Morse, 1909: 84). Guilds rushed to the aid of their members whenever disputes occurred with Western traders, Western steamship companies, or even the Western-operated Chinese Maritime Customs. The resources of the entire guild, including a silent, unannounced but effective boycott of the offender, could be and sometimes were brought to bear (Morse, 1909: 84).

The free traders of the West, after losing many of these confrontations with Chinese guilds, found solace in their own rhetoric that in a just world every man was out for himself. Such combinations were unfair. Such power outside the law was unnatural. It was diabolical, for where else but in the devil's realm could one find such a ghoulish court as that described by the trader and historian Hosea Balou Morse: There was once a guild member who, "in connivance with the magistrate," took in more apprentices than his guild allowed. Because he was protected by the magistrate, the guild felt compelled to exercise great caution, "but the word was passed around 'biting to death is not murder.' Guild members to the number of 120 each took a bite, no one being allowed to leave the place whose lips and teeth were not bloody, and the rebel against the gild was soon no more" (Morse, 1909: 29-30).

By the twentieth century, Western power had convinced some Chinese that China, too, must industrialize. Reformers (both Chinese and Western) then launched an ideological attack on the guild. Not only were guilds unfair, they were outmoded, old-fashioned, and a barrier to industrial development. The myriad craft regulations resulted in a "tyranny of the many over the individual, and a system of control which must by its nature hinder 'freedom of enterprise and independence of individual initiative'" (Morse, 1909: 24). Tied down by regulations and threatened with a boycott against him for any unorthodox behavior, the guild master could not develop into an "industrial captain" (Ch'en, 1922: 168). Most importantly, he could not respond to the increased Western demand by hiring more apprentices and expanding production, which is what some of the Western businessmen would have liked. Otherwise he might be eaten alive, according to Morse's story.

Not only did guilds deprive the masters of the benefits of free enterprise, their apprenticeship system violated two other articles of faith in the catechism of industrial capitalism, free labor and free citizens. The traditional idea that the masters did young men a favor by teaching them a trade was rejected by reformers who insisted that the system was no more than the poorly disguised exploitation of unpaid labor. Bound by feudal ties to their masters and deprived of a proper education, how could these youths become responsible citizens of a republic? (Hall, 1923: n.p.).

In spite of their valiant defense, however, by the 1920s the Chinese guilds were losing the battle and beginning to disappear. In 1932 R. H. Tawney remarked upon the imminent demise of the

craft guild. "Twenty years hence, if not sooner, it will be too late to explore them, for important as they still are in most parts of the country, it is clear that, year by year, their hold is weakening" (Tawney, 1964: 116). He went on to explain that as the demand for products expanded and changed, in part owing to the Western traders' presence, the merchant guilds began swallowing up the craft guilds. "... The craftsman, while continuing to produce by the traditional processes in a workshop or in his home, ceases to deal directly with the market, and is employed on commission by a merchant capitalist." As the process evolved, the merchant, transformed into entrepreneur, not only assumed the role of distributor of finished goods, but also bought and distributed raw materials. The craftsman became alienated from raw material, now owned by the entrepreneur, and from his product, now also the property of the entrepreneur. All that the craftsman still controlled was his tools, and when he lost these, he was finally reduced to his smallest being, a unit of labor power on the market.

It is precisely this differentiation, this process by which men were separated into those who managed and those who worked, into employer and employee, that marked "either the last phase in the evolution of the small master, or ... [the] stage of capitalism preceding that of factory industry" (Tawney, 1977: 116). In short, China, and particularly its guild members, were going through the birth pangs of industrial capitalism.

Changes in the construction industry, however, did not fit Tawney's description exactly. Unlike rugs, porcelain, or silk, buildings could not be produced in one place and then sold in another. There was no merchant counterpart to the construction workers' guild, and Tawney does not explain what would happen in such a case. But as J. S. Burgess's study of Peking's guilds reveals, the differentiation that could not occur along the axis between the merchant guild and the producers' guild occurred within one guild. Some masters became entrepreneurs and so busied themselves with contracting, investing, and other administrative tasks that they no longer worked as carpenters or masons. Only their employees still performed manual labor. Furthermore, these new entrepreneurial types had displaced their seniors and had taken over the guild leadership, and thus could violate traditional practices with impunity (Burgess, 1928: 94).

The most common abuse of tradition was taking on more apprentices than was customary and then putting them to work. And, be-

cause the apprentices were producing, the masters no longer looked upon them as liabilities; indeed, some masters came to see their recruitment as a money-making proposition in itself. They not only responded to the pull of increased demand, they also took advantage of a push factor. Owing to an influx of peasant youth, driven into the cities by poor agricultural conditions exacerbated by warlord armies, employers were able to transform apprenticeship recruitment into what journeymen considered to be little more than a lucrative racket. For example, the masters of Changsha's Lu Ban Temple in 1922 were demanding an apprenticeship fee of 12 yuan (sixty times the daily wage of the most skilled journeyman). And after the three-year apprenticeship had been served, the young man had to pay a guild entrance fee and host an expensive banquet for the board. Since most peasant youths did not have sufficient resources to pay these inflated charges, it was not uncommon for the master to lend them the money. After the worker became a journeyman, he would pay the master back out of his wages. This repayment sometimes required several years, and thus in effect, the youth worked not for the traditional three years without pay, but for five or six years without his full wages (Li Rui, 1957: 192; Yuan, 1961: 30-31; Ch'en, 1922: 167).

Journeymen were the most aware of what damage these changes might do to their own interests; it was primarily their position as members of a small monopoly of skilled labor that was threatened. The ever-increasing number of apprentices raised the spectre of an oversupply of craftsmen. Furthermore, putting apprentices to work meant that certain changes in the organization of labor were required, and that the level of skill required was being lowered, a process that damaged their status as artisans. And after the poorly trained apprentices were promoted to journeymen, they were not paid their full wages — a dangerous precedent for all journeymen.

This differentiation between master and journeyman, the division of the family of Lu Ban into entrepreneur and producer, into employer and employee, meant that the original and natural relationship between teacher and student was replaced by the more casual relationship between employer and employee. Quite clearly this differentiation in function had produced two separate classes, classes with contradictory interests. The masters had gone off on the road to capitalism and had reduced the artisans to workers who could no longer expect to step into their masters' shoes. Although China's construction workers before 1922 did not have any



label to pin on this phenomenon, they did perceive that their leadership was now "different." The "aged and respected" had been pushed aside, and "bad elements" had taken over the guilds (Burgess, 1928: 94).

Precisely because of this recent differentiation that had produced two classes within one guild, the Hunanese Communists were able to move in and organize a modern construction workers' union. Differentiation had left the guild leadership vulnerable to attack and had made it possible for the Communists to convince the workers that their seniors had deserted and betrayed them. The journeymen's sense of betrayal made it possible for the Communists to convince the workers that it was necessary to have a class-delineated modern union — their own autonomous voice — to do battle with these betrayers.

#### *THE ISSUE: A WAGE FREEZE*

The major issue that revealed the differentiation and set off the process of unionization was a demand of the journeymen for higher wages in spite of a wage freeze that had been imposed by the warlord Zhang Jingyao after a construction workers' strike in 1919. After that strike the warlord had frozen wages at 420 cash a day and sworn that they "would never again be increased." But the workers in 1922 asserted that inflation had wiped out their purchasing power. They claimed that if a worker in 1919 had taken his 420 copper cash worth of paper notes to the market, he could have purchased goods worth 30 cents silver. Three years later the same amount of paper would purchase only 20 cents silver worth of goods (JBN, 1959: 383-385; Li Rui, 1957: 191; Yuan, 1961: 31). The workers' real wage had been cut by at least one-third.

When in May 1922 the journeymen of the Changsha Lu Ban Temple set about to remedy this problem, they did so in the traditional manner. The guild met, and the masters agreed that the journeymen's wages should be raised to 34 cents silver a day for the more skilled A workers and 26 cents a day for the B workers. The guild then proceeded to paste up posters announcing that this new wage would go into effect on June 1, 1922.

The announcement, however, met with immediate opposition. The city's street committees, that is the traditional gentry-merchant establishment, persuaded the Changsha district magistrate to en-

force the 1919 wage freeze, thus overruling the guild's decision to increase the wages (JBN, 1959: 457). One assumes that one reason that the street committees reacted so vociferously was that they were the owners of much urban real estate and thus often the employers of carpenters. The guild leadership capitulated. There was nothing that could be done.

The workers were unwilling to give up so easily, but they did not know what to do. Yuan Fuqing, a carpenter who subsequently became a Communist and wrote a history of this strike, described their dilemma. "We only knew how to work. No one knew how to talk to the government." Thus the workers went once again to the guild leadership and finally persuaded them to negotiate with the street associations and the district magistrate in an effort to have the wage freeze rescinded (Yuan, 1961: 31). The directors complied by appointing two negotiators, Kuo Shousong and Gan Zixian, both of whom were minor contractors.

At dawn one June morning these two ascended the steps of Five Harmonies Hall in the Lu Ban Temple and informed the workers that there would be a special negotiations fee. "If we are going to talk to officials and the merchant associations, then we are going to have to entertain them." They requested 50 cents silver from each worker (Li Rui, 1957: 192; Yuan, 1961: 31). This demand that the workers themselves put up the money for the negotiations was totally unexpected. The workers had assumed that the guild, in accordance with traditional practice, would pay these costs, and said as much to Kuo and Gan. The negotiators, however, continued to refuse to use guild funds. "The reason that we are doing this," they explained, "is so that you can increase your wages, so of course, you should pay for it yourselves. You must realize that when the negotiations are completed, the benefits will be yours." By denying the workers the use of guild funds, the directors were the first to indicate that the men who bowed before their ancestral master, Lu Ban, were no longer one big happy Confucian family. They were the first to draw the line between employer and employee, the first to suggest a conflict of interest.

The workers still protested: "We pay entrance fees. We pay monthly dues. Are you suggesting that all this money is sacrificed to the idol?" But Yuan reminisced, "We didn't have any organization and our consciousness was not very high. We were still suffering from illusions about them. We thought that they knew how to read and to write the protests, that they knew how to express

themselves. They could do a better job than we illiterate and rough-spoken workers" (Yuan, 1961: 32). And so the workers paid. The negotiations, however, were unsatisfactory.

After Guo and Gan had the money, they went off to all the fancy restaurants like the Cave Palace [Dongting] Spring, the Great Hunan, and the Meandering Gardens and held sumptuous banquets. They invited the heads of the 256 street associations, prominent merchants and scholars, and district officials. These bloodsuckers managed to fill their bellies with food and wine, but they didn't come up with a cent for us. Every time we asked them about it, they just said, "Be patient. Everything is going to be settled." This dragged on for months, until August, and finally the Changsha district magistrate only offered us the same wages, but in silver currency. We would have gotten 20 percent of a silver yuan a day, and we had paid a negotiation fee of 3,000 silver yuan. After three months, that's all they offered (Yuan, 1961: 33).

The workers at this point were stymied. The guild leadership was unwilling to press further for their demands, and the offer, from the workers' point of view, was inadequate. Although it would protect them against further inflation, it did not restore any of the lost purchasing power. Yet they also felt that they themselves were in no position to pursue the issue alone. They were uneducated, had no direct connections with the local elites, and had no idea about how to play local politics. The failure of the guild leadership to live up to the workers' traditional expectations no doubt left the workers with the impression that they had been abandoned and betrayed by their natural defenders, and they felt stranded. They did not feel any claim upon the rest of society; they had no expectation that help would come from any other quarter. And so in August 1922 they sat and grumbled among themselves.

#### *THE FORMATION OF A UNION*

But there was in Changsha in 1922 a group of educated young men and women, some of whom had very good political connections in the province. Many of them, too, had at one point in their lives been a part of traditional China. They had studied the Confucian classics; they had steeped themselves in China's essence. And that tradition had betrayed them, too. It could not stop the ever-growing degradation of the Chinese nation at the hands of the foreign powers. As intellectuals, however, they had the leisure for ideas and theories, and some, like Mao Zedong, had found solace

and a solution, they thought, in the theories of a German, Karl Marx, and his theories prescribed proletarian revolution. These students and teachers would be more than willing to press home the demands of the construction workers.

The link between the disgruntled construction workers and Mao Zedong, the head of the Communist-led Hunan Labor Secretariat, was a thirty-four-year-old carpenter by the name of Ren Shude. Born in 1888 into an impoverished peasant family in Xiangyin xian, Hunan, Ren Shude had lost his father when he was still quite young. At the age of thirteen (around 1900 or 1901) he had followed his father's younger brother to Changsha where he had become a carpenter's apprentice (Zhonggong Hunan shengwei xuanchuanbu, 1952: 109-110). Mao first met him in the autumn of 1921 when he came to work at Chuan-shan Academy, the site of Self-Education University, a highly politicized, open admissions school that Mao had set up in July 1921. Ren was then a member of the Hunan Labor Association (Li Rui, 1957: 175), an organization founded by anarcho-syndicalists in 1920 that had involved its members in anti-imperialist, anti-warlord, and occasionally anti-capitalist causes, and which also operated a labor-referral service. Since Mao was well acquainted with two of its leaders, it is quite likely that Mao had used their labor-referral service to find a carpenter and that they had sent Ren to Mao.

Ren Shude was a personable man, well-liked according to all accounts, and he and Mao became friends while he was working at the academy. Mao engaged him in many long political discussions and eventually persuaded him to become one of the first Changsha workers to join the Communist Party. Although his fellow construction workers did not know it, Ren was already a member in the summer of 1922, when the guild's negotiators were wining and dining the street associations' members and the men from the district magistrate's office.

Throughout the summer Ren Shude had been witness to the workers' disgruntled conversations, many of which dwelt on the issue of the directors' refusal to use guild money to finance the negotiations. "We gave them more than 3,000 snow-white silver dollars, and we might as well have dumped it into the lake or used it to buy pork dumplings for the dogs." Ren took advantage of their dissatisfaction to emphasize the class distinction that differentiation had produced: "What kind of people do you think these directors are? They're riding high on your heads. You shouldn't even bother to blow your nose for such types who act like officials and wear long

gowns and leather shoes" (Yuan, 1961: 33-34).

That the issue was guild money also made it easy for the Communists to characterize the guild's income as exploitative and thereby justify theoretically the journeymen's complaints about fees and "unfair fines." They further pointed out that the masters had invested this considerable sum in urban real estate from which they were profiting through high rents, thus exploiting the city's tenants (Yuan, 1961: 33-34). And all of these grievances could be traced to differentiation. Their leaders were no longer carpenters and masons, they were businessmen. They were capitalists, and that was why they no longer protected the journeymen's livelihood. While their leaders were responding to new business conditions and reaping the profits, they did not share them with the workers. The workers were still obliged to pay the costs of the feudal structure, but they were now denied its benefits.

Once the bad news had come that the negotiators could offer no more than the same wages in silver, the workers turned to Ren Shude, whom they knew to be "a very helpful person." He suggested that they assemble a meeting of all like-minded workers the next morning at the Lu Ban Temple and settle accounts with the negotiators Guo and Gan.

Even though some 700 or 800 workers gathered the next morning in order to protest, Guo and Gan could come up with no better reply than to ask for more money in order to continue the negotiations. Infuriated, the workers chased the two into Five Harmonies Hall. The workers paused and did not follow them into this inner sanctum. Ren Shude then managed to persuade the workers to wait until they were better organized before making such a direct challenge to the leadership.

The next morning about a dozen activists, including Ren Shude and Yuan Fuqing, gathered to discuss the question of how they, the workers, could press for a wage increase. Their leadership had failed them. They had come to the hard conclusion that they themselves would have to pursue their own interests without their traditional mentors. Exactly how they should go about it, however, was not clear. "We had no experience at this sort of thing. We were like new brides — it was the first time. We all sat around and looked at each other" (Yuan, 1961: 33-38). And then Ren Shude suggested that they organize themselves into ten-man teams and form a new kind of organization, a union. "Tomorrow afternoon we can go to Chuanshan Academy and find a Mr. Mao Zedong. He

can help us do it. He was the one who told me about the ten-man team method." One of the workers asked who this Mr. Mao Zedong was, and Ren replied that he was a schoolteacher. Ren added that Mao was friendly with workers and that it was he who had sent the literacy teachers to the Anyuan coal mines (Li Rui, 1957: 193).

Less than three weeks later, on September 5, 1922, Ren Shude convened the founding congress of the Changsha Construction Workers' Union.<sup>1</sup> The amazing speed with which this union (like many others in China during this period) was created does not necessarily mean that it existed only on paper. Nor does it imply that the Hunanese organizers had supernatural revolutionary powers. The secret to this rapid mobilization was simply that the workers were already organized; they were already members of a guild with a tradition of group solidarity; and they were angry. Seven or eight hundred workers had come to settle accounts with Guo and Gan as soon as the unacceptable August offer had been made; it is not surprising that the Communists were able to mobilize another three or four hundred in the next three weeks. All the Communists had to do was to pull these workers out from under the guild leadership and set up a new organizational apparatus.

It is clear that it was not just a paper union and that Mao and Ren had succeeded in breaking the ties that had bound the workers to the guild leadership. The constitution that Mao drafted for the union not only incorporated the reformist labor program of the national CCP, but also explicitly abolished the "superstitious" sacrifices to Lu Ban and declared that the main purpose of the organization was "to protect the rights and privileges" of the workers. Even more indicative of a real separation is the location of the workers' meetings. Although the union maintained an office at the Lu Ban Temple, the activists first met Mao at Chuanshan Academy, and many subsequent meetings were held there as well as at the Xiangxiang District Lodge (Mao's former residence) and the Xiangxiang Middle School (which Mao had attended), where the union's founding congress was held. Some of the more critical leadership meetings were held at Mao's home in the Clear Water Pond suburb, and mass meetings generally took place at the Hunan Provincial Education Association (Li Rui, 1957: 193; Wang Qingbin et al., eds., 1928, Part I: 610-611). The construction workers obviously had established new connections. The separation of the workers from the temple was ideological as well as physical, and their whereabouts reflected the whereabouts of their newly found mentors.

It is also quite clear from Ren's opening speech at the congress that this separation, on the bases of class, was what made the union real:

We workers are producers; we have created the world and thus we should be the world's lord. But now we are those whom the whole of society despises. Thus we are going to liberate ourselves. We cannot entrust the job to anyone else. The only way to do it is for us to do it ourselves. Changsha has many labor organizations, but they are all fakes; none of them was organized by real workers. We want to organize a real union. Those who have never wielded a saw or trowel cannot enter. It must be this way. Union members will then all share a common interest and continue the struggle together, as one (JBN, 1959: 458).

Although the "real union" advocated by Ren Shude was fundamentally different from the guild because the employers were excluded, there is one sense in which the union did resurrect the spirit of the idealized guild. In the old days, guild leaders had wielded saws and trowels; all the members had shared common interests and all had struggled together. Now differentiation had shattered that unity. However, by redefining the employers as outsiders, the class-delineated union served the workers' instinctive and traditional reaction to pull together into an even tighter group at a time of crisis. This may have been one reason why it was not difficult to persuade them to follow the activists who, when all had seemed lost, had managed to find new mentors and go-betweens with the powers that were in Hunan.

### *THE STRIKE*

The union's first order of business was to strengthen itself internally and to find allies. Thus the activists worked to expand and tighten up the ten-man teams, and they set up a night school, not merely to spread literacy, but also to politicize the workers. But not all lessons were in the classroom. There were a number of educational encounters between the workers and the directors of the Lu Ban Temple. Several were potentially violent, including an incident one night when a crowd of workers broke into the home of a wealthy contractor at dinnertime and proceeded to analyze the differences between the food on his table and their own fare (Yuan, 1961: 40). Again, the emphasis on class differentiation is apparent.

The effort to influence public opinion involved a variety of tactics. Although the police forbade such activities, the workers

handed out leaflets and pasted posters to the walls. The workers, as Yuan Fuqing portrayed them, had a tendency toward confrontation tactics with the police, but they were finally persuaded by Ren Shude to adopt more indirect methods. Thus they went into congested shopping areas and, hidden by the crowd, pasted up their posters or simply tossed them to the wind. And they devised ways of reaching the soldiers in their barracks. One favored method was to wait until the officers had retired and then tie leaflets to arrows and shoot them in. Another was to wrap them around stones and throw them over the walls (Yuan, 1961: 41).

But the effort to reach the public was not limited to the use of walls, leaflets, or projectiles. This struggle was political; the workers wanted to shatter a wage freeze set by a previous warlord and upheld by the current district magistrate. Mao was in a good position to help the workers, for in 1922 he was no newcomer to Hunanese politics. Long before he became a Marxist, he had been involved with a group of urban liberal reformers whose power had been considerable in Hunan ever since the Revolution of 1911 (Esherick, 1976: 237-249). Their leader was Tan Yankai, a Hanlin scholar under the old system and governor of Hunan from October 1911 to October 1913, from August 1916 to August 1917, and from December 1917 to March 1918 (MacDonald, 1975: Part I, Table I). After having been forced out of office three times, usually by a coalition of northern warlords, Tan had made a rousing comeback in 1920 and ousted Zhang Jingyao, the northern warlord who had imposed the wage freeze in 1919. Mao had been one of the major polemicists and organizers against Zhang, and a member of the student faction that had helped bring Tan Yankai back for the fourth time (Cheng, 1973: 78; Siao Yu, 1961: 173). But only months after his triumphal return, Tan was again forced out of Hunan. The patronage that he had offered to Zhao Hengti, an important military figure in his entourage, had been inadequate, and so Zhao had tossed out his ungrateful leader (MacDonald, 1975: 36).

But Tan Yankai, in exile, was in contact with Sun Yat-sen, who in August 1922 had been forced to escape from his former allies in Guangdong and take refuge in Shanghai, along with Tan. The two of them planned a comeback by first establishing a base in Guangdong and then pursuing Sun's dream, a northern expedition from Guangdong, through Hunan, to national power. Zhao knew that he had reason to fear Tan Yankai, particularly a Tan Yankai allied with Sun Yat-sen. Furthermore, Tan still had many sup-



porters in Hunan who could act as a fifth column in the event of an outright challenge. And since it was Zhao who had betrayed Tan, this elite could easily be mobilized against him. (Indeed by 1923 Sun, with Tan in his retinue, had established a base in Guangdong, and in 1926 Zhao was forced out by the armies of the northern expedition.)

Even after he became a Marxist, Mao did not sever his ties with the liberal faction that supported Tan. And in September 1922 Mao called on these associates and asked for their support. In particular he went to the Society for the Promotion of Provincial Autonomy (Li Rui, 1957: 194), some of whose members were hostile to Zhao. (The original goal of this society had been to declare Hunan off limits to outside warlord armies, so that it could be left in peace to pursue its own program of development. This group had also been a major force behind the new constitution for this hopefully autonomous province and had been in the process of drafting the document when Zhao had forced out Tan. Subsequently Zhao dismissed them and promulgated a constitution without their assistance [JBN, 1959: 430].) Mao's relationship with one of the society's members, Long Jiangong, was particularly close. Mao had collaborated with him in 1920 on a petition campaign related to the autonomy issue (MacDonald, 1973: 105-107), and since Long was editor-in-chief of the Dagong bao, an important Changsha newspaper, Mao was able to work through him to secure sympathetic publicity for the construction workers.

But when Mao approached his old associates, he did not come with a condemnation of the guild leadership, a description of differentiation, or a lecture on the class nature of the guild. He talked instead of the constitutional guarantee of free enterprise and the unreasonable government interference that the wage freeze constituted. Why, he asked, is Zhao Hengti ignoring the provincial constitution and allowing the district magistrate to enforce an old edict from a previous, alien (Northern) regime, an edict that is in violation of Hunan's constitution?

It is also possible that Mao was holding out to this reformist elite, at least implicitly, something more than just an issue with which to harass Zhao. The gentry-merchants of the street associations, the conservative elite which had prevailed upon the district magistrate to enforce Zhang Jingyao's wage freeze, were old enemies of the reformers. It was they who had mobilized the craftsmen of Changsha to lead the mobs that had burned down or

vandalized every edifice of reform in April 1910. Even though the balance of power between the conservatives and the reformers had shifted in the latter's favor after the Revolution of 1911, there was no indication that the reformers had developed any mass following, aside from students, among the urban populace. By proposing an alliance with Changsha's 4,000 construction workers, Mao was dangling before the eyes of these reformers not only the prospect of depriving the conservatives of their foot soldiers, but also the possibility of someday enlisting this mass power on their own side. The editorial that Long Jiangong published was not only sympathetic to the workers, it was clearly directed at the district magistrate and the street associations:

It has already been several years since Zhang Jingyao ran out of Hunan, and now the provincial constitution has been promulgated in toto. It is ridiculous to still take the words of Zhang Jingyao as law. If in the future the silver yuan should appreciate until each yuan is worth thousands upon thousands of cash, as it did in 1916 and 1917, are you still going to force these men to honor the laws of Zhang Jingyao and work for only 420 cash a day? In that case the 4,000 construction workers have no choice but to starve to death! And furthermore, when you increase the rent on your real estate holdings are you so particular about observing any man's law? If we should suggest that you are not, then why do you insist on tying up the workers with the words of a provincial governor who has already run out of the province? In the provincial constitution it clearly states that the people are guaranteed free enterprise. If employers object that their wage [demands] are too high, then they should just refuse to hire them. Why do you want to regulate them and keep them from raising their wages? (Li Rui, 1957: 191-192).

The union's formation and its efforts to move the district magistrate through the pressure of public opinion did, in fact, produce results. Those who had wined and dined all summer were called back, and in the last third of September they made a new offer: 26.7 cents silver for A workers and 21.6 cents silver for B workers. This offer was a 6.7 percent improvement over the August offer, but it still was a long way from 34 cents a day, and the workers, as a union, rejected it.

No doubt encouraged by the fact that they had forced the magistrate to back down and offer a higher wage, and still convinced that they should hold out for 34 cents, the union's executive committee began to prepare for a strike. On September 24 they sent telegrams to other labor organizations throughout China, especially to those with Communist affiliations, alerting them that they soon

might need their help. "If the district magistrate decides this issue merely according to the wishes of a few public officials and capitalists,... we will have to resort to the final means — we will have to cease work and sit waiting to die" (JBN, 1959: 459; emphasis added).

Eleven days after this telegram went out, on October 5, the executive committee met at Mao's home and hammered out a proclamation that declared a strike on October 6. Once again a primary concern was public opinion. The decision included a provision that the union would petition the new provincial assembly (a creature of the provincial constitution) which happened to a number of Tan Yankai's supporters (Li Rui, 1957: 194; JBN, 1959: 456). On the morning of the sixth, the proclamation was posted on the walls of Changsha and printed in the newspapers. Curiously, the union avoided the word strike. They called it "free enterprise":

We do hard physical labor. Day after day we are forced to trade our time here on this earth and the very life within us for a few pennies just so that we can support our families. By no means are we idlers who expect to eat without working. Just look at those merchants. A day doesn't go by that they don't hike up their prices, and yet no one objects to that. It's only we workers who sweat all day long for a few pennies who get trampled into the dirt. Nor can we accept the new wage that has just been set by the district magistrate. Now there is simply no way out for us. All we can say is that a just wage for our labor must be more than this. We may not be in a position to enjoy other rights and privileges, but we should at least enjoy free enterprise and the freedom to work or not to work. It is on this ground that we shall make our stand, and go to our deaths if that's what it takes. We will not be deprived of this right in any way whatsoever. At this point we have chosen the only means left: if the A workers do not get 34 cents a day and the B workers do not get 26 cents a day, we workers, as one body, have resolved not to work (Li Rui, 1957: 194-195; JBN, 1959: 459).

On October 6, Changsha was unusually quiet. With very few exceptions, all construction work stopped. On October 7, the union's marshals led a parade in which they carried banners inscribed "Keep up the Strike," "Seek the Aid of All Circles in Society," "A Civilized Strike" (Li Rui, 1957: 195), and "We Ask That All Circles Uphold Justice" (JBN, 1959: 460). The strike was real. The guild leaders obviously and publicly had lost control of their journeymen. The union, although unrecognized, was clearly in control. And to drive this point home, the union persuaded worried customers, anxious about the imminent arrival of cold and rainy weather, to address their requests for workers not to the guild but to the

union. These letters of request offered the workers 34 cents a day. And, except for a special request to put up the ceremonial arches for the national holiday, to which they agreed, the union replied to all the potential customers that they would not work until the district magistrate rescinded the order freezing their wages. "If necessary we will switch to another occupation entirely." And each group requesting workers was asked to go to the district magistrate's office and demand that the wage freeze be ended (Li Rui, 1957: 195).

### *THE PETITION CAMPAIGN*

By the eleventh day of the strike (October 16), there still had been no response from the district magistrate. Apparently both he and the guild leadership were trying to ignore the strike, hoping that it would just go away if given enough time. The executive committee decided that they would have to provoke some response and felt confident in doing so because of considerable evidence of public support. Not only had there been many letters offering 34 cents a day, but they had received telegrams of support and offers of aid from unions as far away as Changxindian, near Beijing (JBN, 1959: 460). The executive committee then decided upon a petition campaign and sent a warning to the magistrate that if all their demands had not been granted by the seventeenth (the next day), they would march on his office with a petition on the nineteenth (Li Rui, 1957: 195).

This threat did bring an immediate response. No doubt Chinese officials dreaded the thought of a mass protest, perhaps because historically such protests were acts of desperation that usually turned into illegal and violent channels. Well-behaved, reasonable demonstrators were not part of that tradition. Hunan's constitution, which did provide for petitions of the reasonable sort, was less than one-year old and certainly not grounds for expecting a dramatic departure from time-worn practice. District Magistrate Zhou Yinggan was not willing to grant all the demands, but he did react by offering to infuse new blood into the mediation committee. After calling a meeting of the long-standing negotiators, he announced on October 17, through the Dagong bao, that additional and impartial merchants, scholars, and members of legal associations had agreed to mediate the strike. (This may have meant that individuals from additional sectors of the elite, possibly including

people from Tan's faction, were being added to the mediation committee.) This new "blue ribbon" committee then wrote directly to the union and urged it to cancel the petition march and settle their differences. They furthermore warned that such a march could lead to incidents "very painful for the workers" (Yuan, 1961: 48). And on the eighteenth, the district magistrate himself ordered the strikers to settle their differences through this newly enlarged committee. He concluded, "If you refuse to listen, you will be bringing bitterness down upon yourselves. . . . Everyone think long and hard, and do not wait until it is too late and you regret it" (Yuan, 1961: 48; JBN, 1959: 461).

The guild leadership also reacted to the threatened petition campaign and to the new blue ribbon committee's direct communication with the union. The first recorded instance of their de facto recognition of the union occurred only at this point when they sent out Kuo Shousong, one of the original negotiators, to discredit the union's leaders. He went from worker to worker saying that Ren Shude was deceiving them and that following him would only lead to disaster. The government would, indeed, take care of such "fomenters of violence" (baotu fenzi).

On the eve of the threatened petition campaign, the executive committee had a serious problem. Although they were no longer being ignored completely, they had not been invited to these new negotiations; nor had the magistrate granted all of their demands. If they were going to make good their threat, they were obliged to carry out the petition campaign. But all of the warnings about unfortunate things happening to petitioners had taken their toll, and some workers had cold feet. They wanted to call off the march and see what this new committee would offer. Faced with a split in the ranks, Ren Shude conceded temporarily. If they tried further negotiations through these good offices and the talks failed, it would serve to educate the workers who still entertained illusions, and in the meantime, it would prevent dissention within the ranks (Yuan, 1961: 48-49).

Thus the union's ultimatum of the sixteenth that they would march on the district magistrate's office on the nineteenth was not fulfilled, and instead the wining and dining started again. As Yuan described it,

The long gowns and leather shoes started going in and out, in and out of the . . . restaurants again . . . . Afterward, the mediators asked Ren Shude and . . . a

number of others to come to a meeting, where they were informed that, "We know how bitter the life of the worker is, but the employers also are in a very difficult position. In the interests of the workers, we have now decided not to distinguish between A and B workers, but to offer everyone alike 30¢ a day" (Yuan, 1961: 49).

The union's leaders had been summoned merely to hear the verdict, and this new offer was devastating. It was a very clever way of splitting the ranks of the strikers along the lines of seniority and skill and discrediting the new and inexperienced union leadership, which already had been forced to back down on one threat. Although the new offer denied the A workers 34 cents a day, a figure that the union had staked its reputation on, it offered the B workers four cents more than the union was asking. If one assumes that there was an equal number of A workers and B workers, the new wage bill would have been no less expensive than if the mediators had offered the workers precisely what the union was demanding. What is more likely, however, is that there were more B workers than A workers, and thus this offer, if accepted, would have been more expensive, in financial terms, than what the union was asking. Furthermore, the offer was a significant improvement over the late September offer of 26.7 cents for A workers and 21.6 cents for B workers and constituted a 50 percent increase over the wages the A workers had been receiving before the strike was declared (the equivalent of 20 cents silver). Obviously the employers were willing to pay a high price in order to destroy the union.

Ren Shude rejected the offer on the spot. Obviously he was angry, and when he returned to the executive committee to explain what he had done, he convinced them that the mediators' intentions were "vicious," and he "exposed" their attempt to split the strikers' ranks and destroy the union. Since when did a mediation committee offer more than the workers were demanding, especially after they had previously pleaded that their own situation was "difficult"? If they were so poor why were they now offering to pay the B workers four cents a day more than the union had demanded? Surely the B workers would not sell out the union for a few pieces of silver. The executive committee agreed, and they also agreed that they would have to implement the petition campaign if the A workers were going to get their 34 cents a day and if the union was going to survive (Li Rui, 1957: 196; Yuan, 1961: 49).

On October 21, the executive committee called a membership meeting at the yard of the Education Association. Several thousand

workers came and endorsed the executive committee's decision that there was to be no compromise over the 34 cent goal. They further agreed to threaten yet another petition campaign and authorized the leadership to send a telegram to the district magistrate, saying that if there was no progress within the next twenty-four hours, a petition would be presented on the twenty-third. Sixteen representatives, including Ren and Yuan, were selected to present the petition (Yuan, 1961: 49).

That the mass of strikers agreed to follow the executive committee may have been owing in part to the fact that the guild leadership had once again violated the traditional prerogatives of the skilled craftsmen. By attempting to blur the distinctions among the workers, distinctions based on seniority and skill, just when the gap between entrepreneur and producer was growing was, no doubt, a mistake on the part of the mediators. In such a context the B workers, who were journeymen, may have felt sufficiently threatened by yet another departure from tradition that they were left unimpressed by this act of unsolicited generosity. Furthermore, the lesson might have penetrated that ever since the formation of the union, the offers had gone steadily upward, and that so far there had been no serious consequences.

On the next day, October 22, however, the district magistrate once again prohibited the petition march, and he further declared that if the workers should ignore his ban and attempt to present the petition, all those concerned would be dealt with "according to the law." And he officially labeled the sixteen representatives who had been selected to present the petition as "fomenters of violence" among the working population (Li Rui, 1957: 196). The use of this term by a government official revived the workers' fears. In particular, it called forth memories of January 1922, when the anarchist-organized Hunan Labor Association had sent two student representatives, Huang Ai and Pang Renquan, to negotiate with the warlord governor, Zhao Hengti. The workers never saw their leaders again, for Zhao had beheaded them the same night for being "fomenters of violence" among the working population. Once again, on the eve of the declared petition campaign, not only were the sixteen representatives frightened, but there was serious dissonance in the ranks.

It was only at this critical point that the school teacher, the man with connections, made his first recorded appearance before the entire body of strikers. At midnight on the evening of October 22,

Mao Zedong got up and convinced them that a petition campaign would not necessarily lead to disaster:

The objective situation at present is totally different from what it was when Huang and Pang led that strike. On the one hand, the workers are very well organized and they are strong. We are right in the middle of... a strike wave. We have all the working class in Changsha behind us,... and the sympathy of all sorts of people. On the other hand, Zhao Hengti is isolated, and furthermore, this strike is not so directly related to his personal interests as the one at the No. 1 Spinning Mill, and so he will not be so adamant. We have to hold out. Victory is in our grasp (Li Rui, 1957: 197; Yuan, 1961: 50-51).

The march began at 8:00 a.m. on October 23, when some 4,000 workers massed in the yard of the Education Association. In spite of rainy weather, the workers formed their columns and arranged two large banners across the front of the ranks, "Construction Workers' Union Petition Rally" and "Thirty-four cents a Day or We Won't Leave the District Office!" Other official slogans included: "Thirty-four Cents or We Won't Work!" and "Oppose Fake Autonomy and Realize True Autonomy!" (Yuan, 1961: 51; Li Rui, 1957: 197). (The last slogan was directed at Governor Zhao Hengti, whom his enemies claimed had misused the slogan of provincial autonomy in order to pursue his own military interests. Later Mao would define "true autonomy" to include the workers' right to strike.) Mao was not with the representatives, but stayed hidden among the ranks as the marchers left for the district magistrate's office (JBN, 1959: 462).

When the marchers reached the Changsha District Office, they found the main gate blocked by a table. On top of the table were two benches, and on top of the benches was a large sign proclaiming the equivalent of martial law, which meant that offenders could be shot on sight. There was also a sign proclaiming that "The Daily Wage of All Construction Workers Shall Be 30 Cents."

The executive committee stationed marshals, eight at the main gate and forty at the other gates, to ensure that no one went in or out except on strike business. The sixteen representatives then divided themselves into two shifts and the first went in to talk with the district magistrate. Mao remained outside, still hidden in the ranks.

Both Ren Shude and Yuan Fuqing were on the first shift. According to Yuan, they found the magistrate sitting on a "Throne of the Grand Tutor." After glaring at them, the magistrate muttered,



"Please sit." Ren Shude inquired if "His Honor" had seen their telegram, and Zhou Yinggan replied in the affirmative. Ren continued, "If we don't receive this small raise, we won't be able to live. Your Honor is the official called the Parent of the People, a parent who should rule over us." The magistrate replied that he had already increased the wage to 30 cents a day and insisted that that was enough for them to feed themselves. He refused to offer more. He also added that this was already a concession in that the 1919 agreement had stipulated that there was never again to be a raise (Yuan, 1961: 51-53). The magistrate was right on at least two points. He had conceded on the wage freeze and 30 cents was a good offer, but it was also designed to destroy the union.

Not having done very well on that issue, Ren changed the subject and asked the magistrate what right he had to interfere in the matter of wages. He added that the June wage freeze had been unjust and that there was no legal basis for the magistrate's continued involvement (JBN, 1959: 461). A soldier standing nearby suggested that the magistrate was tired and should go rest and perhaps the representatives should be locked up. The workers then dared the soldier to try to lock them up and pointed to their fellow union members outside. Thus ended the negotiations, although the representatives remained inside the District Office (Yuan, 1961: 53). Later the second shift replaced them and, unable to talk to the magistrate, merely sat and waited.

#### *ENTER THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNOR*

Up to this point in the strike, its eighteenth day, the warlord, Governor Zhao Hengti, had had no overt role in the dispute except as the target of appeals and the object of criticism. Perhaps he was actively trying to stay out of this dispute after having suffered a serious blow to his prestige in January when he had executed Huang and Pang. Public condemnations of his precipitous act had come not only from within Hunan but also from national leaders such as Cai Yuanpei, chancellor of Beijing University, and Sun Yat-sen, who now seemed to be allied with Zhao's enemy, Tan Yankai (Ma, 1958: I, Pt. 1, 197). But in spite of his low profile, the strikers insisted that insofar as the district magistrate was violating the constitution, Zhao Hengti was responsible.

Given the impasse between the magistrate and the petitioners, however, Zhao could not remain aloof for long. A potentially vio-

lent incident soon obliged him to intervene. Several of the strikers attempted to force their way through a gate, at which point the guards pointed their bayonets at the workers (Li Rui, 1957: 198). At least one worker grabbed a rifle away from the guards, and although he soon returned it, the magistrate felt obliged to appeal to Governor Zhao to send a company of troops to the scene, which he did (JBN, 1959: 462; Li Rui, 1957: 198).

Then, dashing any hopes that the magistrate and the governor might have entertained that the workers would go home at nightfall, the strikers commenced rather obvious preparations for spending the night, just as it began to get dark. Workers from the pencil factory, the electric company, tailors, textile workers, and barbers came by to demonstrate their support, and they brought with them turnip cakes, cigarettes, and tea. They also brought lanterns, toilet paper, and oilcloth to be used as pallets. It was clear to all that the petitioners intended to stay until their demands were granted, no matter how long that might be (JBN, 1959: 462; Yuan, 1961: 54).

But Zhao Hengti was unwilling to leave them there all night. It was too great a danger to public security. Thus at 8:00 that evening he sent a staff officer to talk to the union. This man guaranteed the representatives that if they would send the workers home Governor Zhao personally would see that the strike was settled to their satisfaction within three days. The union, however, rejected the offer. They insisted that they would not leave until they had won their 34 cents a day. At midnight Zhao's deputy reported back. Faced with an impasse, Zhao asked Wu Jinghong, director of the Provincial Department of Administration, to telephone the union's representatives. He promised the workers that if they would leave, he would call a meeting of all the negotiators at 2:00 p.m. the following day, that the union's representatives would be included in the talks, and that a settlement would be reached at that meeting, no matter what happened. Having succeeded in moving the talks to the governor's office, and having been invited to those talks, the union agreed to send the workers home. It was 3:00 a.m., October 24 (Li Rui, 1957: 199-200; Yuan, 1961: 55; JBN, 1959: 463).

At 10:00 that morning, 1,000 workers assembled in the yard of the Education Association. Mao also met there with the sixteen representatives and impressed on them that now that the talks had reached the provincial level, the constitutional issue of free enter-

prise was crucial. He and the sixteen representatives then left the workers at the Association and proceeded to the talks, which were then being held at the Governor's offices (Li Rui, 1957: 200). Once they arrived, however, they were not admitted to the negotiations chamber. They were escorted into a reception room and told to wait. When they had still not been invited inside after several hours, they summoned Wu Jinghong and told him that if he did not fulfill his promises, they were going to call 1,000 workers over to sit in around his office — that is, the offices of his employer, the governor. To forestall such an event, Wu finally let them into the negotiations chamber.

Their admission to the negotiations chamber was the beginning of the end of the strike. Ren Shude began the discussion by dwelling on the fact that many of those present, men who were blocking their raise, were the very same prominent citizens who had raised the rents in the city as well as the price of rice and coal. Wu replied that the government was not responsible for those price increases. Mao then, for the first time, met the public on the union's behalf. He suggested to Wu that if the government had the right to freeze the wages of the construction workers, then it surely had the right to control prices. On what basis did it claim the right to regulate wages if it could not regulate prices? Wu's reply avoided the question and accused the union of obstructing a government office.

But, Mao said, the workers had not obstructed the magistrate's office; nor were they threatening to obstruct the Governor's office.

We are just trying to follow the letter of the law . . . . Article Sixteen of the Constitution stipulates: "The people shall have the right to petition the government and demand relief from disaster or distress." At the present time, owing to inflation, the life of the common people has reached the state of disaster. We construction workers labor all day long and still we cannot feed or clothe our families. Instead, we sit and watch them starve to death. Today, based on the stipulations of this constitution, we have come to the government to petition. What law are we breaking? Please inform us, Honorable Department Director, Sir (Yuan, 1961: 57).

Wu suspected that he was not arguing with a worker and asked Mao for his name. Mao dodged the question and launched into a discussion of Adam Smith. Free enterprise meant that not only was an employer free to conduct his business in the most profitable way that the market allowed, it also meant that workers could

refuse to work. If a businessman could stop producing and selling a product because its price fell so low that he could no longer make the desired profit, then workers could stop working, or selling their labor, because their wage, the price for their labor, was no longer attractive. The government should not interfere with either party's decision. It should not force the workers to work for a wage that they regarded as too low, and that was precisely what a wage freeze was designed to do. The wage freeze violated the principle of free enterprise. Free enterprise was guaranteed by the provincial constitution, and thus the wage freeze was in violation of the constitution, and Wu Jinghong's boss, the warlord Zhao Hengti, was condoning the district magistrate's violation of the constitution. And if Zhao continued to let that happen, then obviously he was unwilling to implement the constitution (which is what the supporters of Tan Yankai had consistently maintained). The workers' employers, back in May, had agreed to pay them 34 cents a day, and the government had had no right to interfere with that decision (JBN, 1959: 463).

The directors of the Lu Ban Temple, who had been listening to Mao's lecture on free enterprise, could restrain themselves no longer. They interrupted to point out that if there were to be free enterprise such as Mao described it, then there could be no guild. Anyone could come into the community and sell a product or provide a service for whatever price he wanted. Throughout all their speeches about free enterprise, neither Mao nor the union leaders had mentioned the obvious, that guilds as institutions were the most glaring violation of this liberal constitution. That this point was left for the guild masters to make is only one indication that the union was more interested in overcoming a wage freeze than in implementing any abstract principle of law.<sup>2</sup>

Wu seized on the guild leaders' objection to free enterprise and asked, "If the construction industry cannot make up its mind, what am I supposed to do?" His question implied that the industry was still one big happy family, that the guild leaders still represented the workers. Indeed, he had left the union's representatives out in the hall for the larger part of that day. But Mao used this opening to suggest that the union, not the guild leaders, represented the workers. He suggested that if Wu really wanted to know what the construction workers wanted, he send someone over to the Education Association. There were 1,000 workers there and they could clear up any confusion. Wu did send a messenger to the

association, and he soon returned with the news that there were indeed 1,000 workers there, and they wanted to know what had happened to their representatives, and they all demanded free enterprise. Convinced that the union would call the workers over to surround Zhao's offices if he did not deliver the promised settlement, Wu Jinghong yielded to the union at 8:00 p.m., October 24, the nineteenth day of the strike. He conceded the point that the district magistrate's wage freeze was in violation of the constitution, that the government had had no right to interfere. Mao immediately wrote out a statement for him to sign, and the sixteen journeymen, the union's representatives, wrote their names directly below that of the director of the Department of Administration of the Hunan Provincial Government. Ren Shude then carried this piece of paper back to the yard of the Education Association and read it to a cheering crowd (Li Rui, 1957: 201).

On October 26 (the twenty-first day of the strike), Mao and the union leadership were so sure that victory was imminent that they called out all the workers in Changsha who belonged to unions affiliated with the Labor Secretariat. Textile workers, electric plant employees, railroad workers, barbers, writing brush makers, tailors, painters, printers, tea shop employees, ricksha pullers, and lithographers, among others, joined the construction workers on the grounds of the Provincial Education Association. According to some reports, over 20,000 people lined up for the victory procession (Li Rui, 1957: 201-202). After assembling this mass, Mao and the sixteen representatives told them to wait in place, while they went to Wu Jinghong's office to get their petition signed.

The petition made explicit what had only been implicit in Wu's statement of the previous day: the A workers would get 34 cents a day. It boldly proclaimed that only the district magistrate remained opposed to this wage and that this "Parent of the People" was thus violating the constitution. The petition further confirmed the legality of the union's methods, indicating that the right both to strike and to petition were guaranteed by Article Sixteen, entitled "Pleas against Oppressive Government."

When Mao and the representatives arrived at Wu Jinghong's office, however, there was a problem. It appears that the guild leaders had prevailed on Wu to try to salvage their position, for Wu wanted to insert a clause that read, "Their wages shall be determined by consultation at any time, but they cannot be determined solely on the part of the said workers." The sources do not explain

why Wu might have wanted to insert such a phrase, but one likely possibility is that consultation meant consultation between masters and journeymen. "Solely on the part of the said workers" would then mean the union. The guild leadership, which had previously left the workers behind while they themselves marched down the road to progress, were now trying to hold on to their traditional prerogatives and leadership. But Mao would not let them, and he and Wu were deadlocked over this issue.

Meanwhile back at the Education Association the thousands waiting in line to march were becoming anxious. Unaware of the reason for the delay, they feared that their leaders might have suffered the same fate as the two students beheaded in January. To find out what had happened, they marched to the provincial governor's office (JBN, 1959: 463; Li Rui, 1957: 202). When Wu Jinghong saw this throng arriving at his gate, he decided not to pursue the matter of the guild's prerogatives. He abandoned its leadership, eliminated the clause, and signed the petition. The representatives then went outside and announced to the crowd that after twenty-one days, complete victory had been won. Cries of "Long Live Free Enterprise," "Long Live Labor," and "Workers of the World, Unite" filled the air. The procession then wound its way through Changsha's lanes, and the construction workers went about plastering the walls with the news that

from now on, every employer must pay 34 cents a day, otherwise we will not come to work. This right of free enterprise has always been guaranteed by the provisions of the provincial constitution and merely was not enforced previously. Now it shall be. Starting tomorrow, the construction workers will be back at work as usual (Li Rui, 1957: 202).

Some two weeks after the strike was over, news of the construction workers' victory was published in an English-language newspaper, The Weekly Review of the Far East, which on November 11, 1922, gave the following account:

Hunan officials have just experienced a labor strike by carpenters in Changsha who demand higher wages. Changsha officials, through the Commissioner of Home Affairs in Hunan [Wu Jinghong, head of the Provincial Department of Administration] attempted suppressing the labor movement, but the workmen's demand did not exceed that of a bare living wage. A labor procession took place in Changsha last month, and after that ten delegates were appointed to interview the Commissioner. After much discussion the workmen's demand for better wages was acceded to. The average wage for a workman is about 34 cents for

an eight-hour day, and overtime is not reckoned at doubled rate, but at the same rate as the eight hour work ("News from Central China," Weekly Review of the Far East, Vol. 22 (November 11, 1922), p. 386).<sup>3</sup>

#### *UNFINISHED BUSINESS WITH THE GUILD*

The only thread remaining to be unraveled was the workers' relationship with the Lu Ban Shrine. The shrine was in a very awkward position: by failing to pursue seriously the workers' demand for 34 cents a day, and finally siding with the government, they had completely lost control of the situation and had ended up with free enterprise. On October 27 the union installed their placard on the premises of the shrine, although they do not appear to have actually occupied the inner buildings, such as the Wu Mu Pavilion.<sup>4</sup>

When the confrontation between the union and the guild finally occurred, it was almost anticlimactic. One morning Guo Shousong, one of the contractors who had collected the original "negotiations fee," approached two workers and informed them that there was going to be a celebration in honor of their patron Lu Ban and invited the two and Ren Shude to come. The workers were suspicious. It was not the traditional date to celebrate their patron, but they nevertheless reported the invitation to Ren Shude.

Ren Shude, equally suspicious, conferred with Zhu Youfu and Shu Yulin. They decided to attend the celebration with a contingent of workers waiting outside in case there should be any trouble. Other workers were worried when they heard the news and stopped work in order to go to the shrine.

When the union officials arrived, they were surprised by the guest list. It included the annual directors for the last three years, the Changsha district officials, and men from all of the street organizations. The guests also included four policemen. When everyone was seated, "Shorty the Seventh" Xiong arose and made a few remarks. "Gentlemen, I would like to take advantage of this celebration in honor of our patron to discuss a matter of the utmost importance to this shrine." Looking straight at Ren Shude, he continued:

From ancient times the Changsha construction workers have belonged to this Lu Ban Shrine; generation after generation it has been this way. Now there are a small number of extremists who are opposed to the Lu Ban Shrine. Several days ago they organized a Construction Workers' Union. This is a breach of the traditional system. Thus, in my opinion, we should put an end to this union and remove the placard. What do you gentlemen think? (Yuan, 1961: 62).

All of the distinguished guests agreed. Another of the annual directors, Zhou Xinglou, arose. Amid the general applause he raised his hands and, looking at Ren Shude, said, "Little brother, do you hear what they say?"

Ren Shude broke in,

We can hear very clearly. This shrine is an organization that exploits workers. We asked for an increase in our wages and you collected over 3,000 silver yuan from us and gave us nothing. The union is the workers' own organization. We will rely on our own power, and we will win benefits for the workers. If anyone dares to try to tear down our union, he had better be careful or he will be sorry (Yuan, 1961: 62).

A shouting match broke out, and finally Zhou ordered the four policemen to arrest Ren Shude and the other two guests from the union and to tear down the placard. Ren Shude and the other union members ran out the door and called in the workers who had been standing by. They swarmed into the courtyard and demanded that the men who had threatened their union come out. "We don't want any annual directors! We can take care of ourselves!"

The distinguished guests hid in the Wu Mu Pavilion and refused to come out, and Ren Shude meanwhile forced Zhou Xinglou to hand over the accounts of the shrine. And, as Yuan Fuqing says, "From that day on, the feudal guild that had ruled the lives of the construction workers for hundreds of years, the Lu Ban Shrine, was completely destroyed" (Yuan, 1961: 64).

That the guild was actually destroyed is questionable, despite Yuan Fuqing's enthusiastic pronouncement to that effect. Although the construction workers' strike was declared a complete success, the union in 1923 was described as "relatively weak." Four thousand construction workers participated in the strike, but only 2,000 belonged to the union ("Shengxian xia zhi Hunan," 1923: 74, 76). The remaining 2,000 might still have exhibited some allegiance to the traditional guild.

#### *THE SUPERFICIAL NATURE OF THE BOURGEOIS ASPECTS OF THE STRIKE*

This strike of construction workers in a provincial capital was in many ways quite different from the Anyuan miners' strike. It lasted twenty-one days, instead of five, and it took place at a center of political power, not in a border region. And because it



took place inside the provincial boundaries, the strikers could claim the protection of the Hunan provincial constitution, which had been promulgated in January 1922. It also occurred in a place where Hunan's reformist elite, supporters of constitutionalism, was concentrated.

Because Mao and the union used the provincial constitution and its guarantee of free enterprise, and because a newspaper representing the views of at least one faction of the liberal elite supported the strikers, this strike might be described as pro-bourgeoisie as well as pro-worker. One might see in this process of unionization the beginnings of an alliance of Hunan's liberal elite with Changsha workers. By forming a modern union, by repudiating the guild masters' leadership, the workers weakened the guild system, a feudal relic and a fetter on capitalist development. The strike might also be called pro-bourgeoisie since it pried the workers away from their loyalties to a dying system and its die-hard defenders, the guild masters and their allies, the conservative wing of the gentry-merchant elite. By thus depriving this declining sector of the elite of their pawns, unionization weakened the enemies of the reformers. It removed a political as well as economic obstacle in the path of progress.

This, in and of itself, was not an un-Marxist accomplishment. Marx himself believed that capitalism had performed certain historically beneficial functions. In 1847 he wrote, "The bourgeoisie, during its scarce one hundred years, has created more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together" (Marx and Engels, 1959: 12). Indeed, one might argue that it is only when a society's productive capacity is sufficient to meet the basic needs of every individual within it that socialism can be realized. If guilds had become a restraint on the development of China's productive capacity, their destruction fulfilled at least one prerequisite for the eventual realization of socialism.

It would, however, be a mistake to put too much emphasis on the pro-bourgeoisie aspects of this strike. They are, essentially, superficial. The use of liberal ideology, specifically, the use of the free enterprise clause in the provincial constitution, was strictly a tactical move. The origin of the workers' problem was a wage freeze, and thus the union condemned unwarranted government interference in the economy. The appeal to the bourgeois constitution was likewise a convenient way out of the trap dug for

the union by the blue ribbon panel that made the offer of 30 cents a day for all, A and B workers alike. The only rationale for rejecting that calculated plum, of holding out for those last 4 cents and preserving the union's credibility, was the constitutional issue of free enterprise.

Furthermore, when Mao and the union's leaders resorted to these liberal terms, they felt free to define them in new and different ways. In the strike declaration, they referred to the liberals' slogan of autonomy, but they used the word to mean not provincial autonomy but autonomy for the workers. The workers themselves should decide for what wage they would work, and no one, not the guild leaders, the district magistrate, or the governor, had any right to interfere. Free enterprise meant that the workers could choose not to work, at least not as carpenters, until the price for their labor rose to an attractive level. In the meantime, they could exercise their freedom to starve or to switch to another occupation. Mao thus managed to define the guarantee of free enterprise as a legal right to strike. In short, he showed the workers how to use the reformers' rhetoric and laws for their own purposes.

More fundamentally, if one ignores labels and examines the realities of the situation, this strike was not truly antiguild or anti-feudal. The guild leaders had changed. They had become capitalists. What had been feudal was already gone for the most part. Only the shell was left. These modern employers had not exerted themselves to protect the workers' livelihood, and they had violated the traditional practices that guaranteed the journeymen's privileges and status. When the Communists first encountered them, the workers were already hostile toward capitalism, toward this new capitalist leadership and the changes it had wrought. They already looked on the guild leaders as betrayers of the craft's solidarity.

But their hostility toward their employers was shaped by a traditional, precapitalist perspective. The Communists were able to inculcate them with Marxist ideas about class, the labor theory of value and proletarian rule ("We have created the world and thus we should be the world's lord"), and the notion of human labor as a commodity to be bought and sold ("Day after day we are forced to trade our time here on this earth and the very life within us for a few pennies...") only because they did not condemn these workers as reactionaries, or force a truly liberal solution upon them. They were effective because they verbalized the workers'

resentment against the changes that the march of progress had wrought. In one sense, they took up the cry against progress, against capitalism, by organizing a potentially anticapitalist union.

The Communists, unlike the reformers, never objected to guilds as inhibitors of industrial captains; nor did they ever attack the traditional apprenticeship system, only the leadership's abuses of that system. Theirs were not the criticisms of the bourgeois reformers. They directed their fury not at the ideal guild of the past, but at the new guild leadership, and as spokesmen for the journeymen, their criticisms often came from within that old system, not from without. The question of the constitutional legality of the guild as an institution was never raised by Mao or any union member. It was the guild leaders themselves who suggested that guilds and free enterprise were incompatible.

It is also clear from the various accounts of this strike that the victory was won largely owing to the efforts of the workers themselves, not to any inordinate help from Hunan's liberals. It was no doubt helpful to have the support of a newspaper editor, and Mao did make good use of liberal issues and implicitly threaten the governor by implying that any failure to carry out the provisions of the constitution might give Tan Yankai's supporters yet another issue to use against him. But, one must remember that neither Tan Yankai nor his new ally, Sun Yat-sen, was in any position to offer real help in October 1922. Both of them were political refugees in Shanghai at that point, and not nearly as menacing as the mass of construction workers who threatened to sit in at the governor's office, or the crowd of 20,000 that did march there on the day of the settlement. In this respect, the construction workers' strike did resemble that of the miners.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Two sources indicate that the union was formed after the strike (Yuan, 1961: 60; Udaoka, 1926: 176). However, both Li Rui (1957: 193) and JBN (1959: 458) give the founding date as September 5, 1922. Since both Li Rui and the authors of JBN make considerable use of Changsha newspapers and in general seem to have the most reliable dates, I have accepted their chronology on this point.

<sup>2</sup>The American consul in Changsha was not deceived by the free enterprise rhetoric, but he did not realize that the slogan was first raised by the union. He thought it was merely a face-saving device resorted to by the governor (Meinhardt, 1923: 850.4).

<sup>3</sup>This item's reference to overtime pay indicates that free enterprise was not the only demand. There is, however, no available list of all the demands.

<sup>4</sup>Yuan Fuqing dates the establishment of the union from a meeting which took place the night before this placard was installed (1961: 60). Udaoka Yasushi (1926: 176) and Wang Qingbin et al. (eds) (1928: 610-611) also date the founding of the union from the installment of the placard after the strike. The wording of the accounts in these two sources is almost identical and along with Yuan's account might have been taken from the same source (unidentified in all three cases).

## The Lead-Type Compositors and Printers' Strike

The Lead-type Compositors and Printers' Union has been described as the "leading factor" and the "moving spirit" behind the Hunanese labor movement (CEB, 1925: VI, No. 215 [April 4]: 187). Perhaps it was quite natural that the printers played such an important role. Better educated than most workers (some had a primary or even secondary education) and close to the political and literary currents of the time, printers the world over are known for their organizing talents (CEB, 1925: VI, No. 221 [May 16], 187; Chesneaux, 1968: 411). The story of their strike in November 1922 is also one of the most interesting, for it involves an illuminating split between traditional craftsmen and modern workers and, thus, illustrates some of the tensions that shaped the labor movement of the early 1920s, and it reveals an equally intriguing argument between Mao Zedong and his old friends and mentors in Hunan's liberal reformist elite. Mao, as labor leader, appears to have identified completely with the workers and to have been oblivious to national Party policies which favored a united front against militarism and imperialism. In November 1922 he demonstrated contempt, not sympathy, for that liberal intelligentsia from which he had come.

### *PRINTING IN CHINA*

It is most significant that the printers who went on strike in November 1922 were lead-type compositors and printers. Unlike miners and construction workers, and block printers and lithographers, they performed a job that had not existed in China before the nineteenth century. Their job was a Western import. In this respect they were similar to the mechanics, but they were somewhat different from the mechanics too, since they generally worked

in an industry that not only included lead-type printers but also the more traditional varieties.

Printing in China was an old and established industry. Like gunpowder and the compass, it was a Chinese invention. Joseph Needham, the foremost English-language historian of Chinese science and technology, indicates that although the earliest known print dates from the eighth century, experimental printing may have begun as early as the sixth century (Needham, 1954: I, 126). Thomas Francis Carter, who documented the spread of the craft from China to Europe, has remarked that, East or West, "It can be said with equal truth that every advance into new territory made by printing has had as its motive an expanding religion" (Carter, 1931: 17). This was certainly the case in China where the development of block printing was closely related to the proclivities of Buddhists. "... The Buddhists had always felt the necessity for unending repetitions of sacred names, sutras, pictures of Bodhisatvas, holy ejaculations, etc. . ." (Needham, 1954: I, 126).

The printing of the Buddhist texts was followed by the printing of the Confucian classics in 983 and the Taoist literature in 1019 (Needham, 1954: I, 131). During the Song dynasty (960-1279 A.D.), an expansion of the printing industry led to the greater availability of Confucian classics, and thus the ranks of the scholar-gentry increased in number, and officialdom was recruited from a much wider circle of families (Needham, 1969: 65n.).

Printers during the Song dynasty also experimented with movable type, but it never replaced block-printing in traditional China in the way it did in the West (Carter, 1931: 160-161). There are at least two reasons for this. The Chinese language has no alphabet and thus instead of working with a font of some twenty-six letters, the Chinese printer was faced with thousands of discrete characters. A second reason was that Chinese printers were unaware of the technique of pressure inking by means of rollers. They applied the ink to the type or the block with brushes, and "... the wood outlasted soft type metals under the Chinese method of brushing ink over the type face" (Britton, 1933: 83-84). Furthermore, wood-block printing was less expensive, more mobile, and more aesthetic (Barnett, 1973: 132-134). Even though it did not flourish in China, movable print, or the idea of movable print, nevertheless spread westward out of China. Needham is convinced that Gutenberg, who is generally credited in the West with the invention of movable print (about the year 1447), "knew of Chinese

movable-block printing, at least by hearsay" (Needham, 1969: 65n.).

Newspapers, a modern product of movable-type printing, did not exist in China until the nineteenth century. The closest thing which they did have from the tenth century on was the official gazette — a sort of newsletter for officialdom published at regular intervals. These gazettes described events at the imperial court and published edicts, memorials and sometimes learned essays on social or political issues. Printed from clay blocks and dispatched by official mail service, they were widely read among the literati of the Song, Ming, and Qing dynasties (Lin, 1936: 11, 77).

It was the Western Protestant missionary who introduced newspapers to China and eventually promoted the widespread use of movable lead type (Lin, 1936: 91). Wood-block printing was not acceptable to the missionaries. It was, in their opinion, wasteful and slow, and the number of good impressions that one could get from a wood-block was limited. Furthermore, the missionaries were dependent on Chinese carvers, and thus they could not "command" the art (Barnett, 1973: 132-134). Robert Morrison, an early Protestant missionary and a printer, concluded in 1833 that movable print was the only solution:

In China, all the lighter reading, and tracts for the poor, are in respect of religion, science, and morality, miserably deficient, or positively bad. A new literature, innocent and instructive, must be created by the friends of China. And to produce it, I know nothing so important as the casting of cheap movable types, of Chinese characters (Barnett, 1973: 137-138).

The Western missionaries in China struggled for decades to produce a practical, inexpensive font of Chinese characters, and they had succeeded by the 1860s. In addition to developing the type and introducing the latest inking processes and presses from the West, the missionaries were also responsible for designing the standard modern Chinese font in which the characters are arranged according to the 214 radicals of the Kangxi dictionary (Britton, 1933: 83-84). This technological superiority gave the Western press in China a tremendous advantage. The American Presbyterian Mission Press, founded in the 1840s, was not only the most prominent of Western presses in China, but it was "probably also the most active printing establishment of any kind in the whole Chinese empire" (Barnett, 1973: 84).

It did not take very long for Chinese-owned printing houses to

adopt the new methods. The process by which these innovations were absorbed and its timetable have yet to be studied. Yet one student of the periodical press assures his readers, "With the expansion of the press, metallic typography and machine printing came into general use" (Britton, 1933: 84), thus creating in China a new profession — the lead-type compositor and printer.

The major purpose of the early missionary papers had been the propagation of the gospel. News was of minor importance. As Chinese publishers entered the periodical scene this tendency did not subside; only the content of the gospel changed. After the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), there was a great outpouring of publications, many of them involved in the controversy over reform, revolution, and China's fate. "Revolution was the impetus for the development of Chinese newspapers," and their aim was to arouse the public. Shielded from the Manchu authorities, the papers congregated in the foreign settlements (Tseng, 1971: 34). One author has gone so far as to proclaim, "The Revolution of 1911 was in a very real sense the result of political agitation carried on by means of these periodicals and newspapers at great risk to the writers" (Lin, 1936: 80).

Exactly what happened to the mass of China's wood-block printers after the introduction of lead-type printing is not completely clear. Chesneaux suggests that many skilled workers such as carpenters, mechanics, and weavers were recruited by the new enterprises and retrained and thus successfully made the transition from handicraft artisan to modern worker. He further suggests that these workers, at first, remained members of their old guilds, but that eventually these workers' relationship to the guilds became meaningless since the guild could not control the craft or protect the worker. The new workers and their new employers then began to form their own organizations. These were the transitional organizations, referred to earlier, that devoted themselves to the upgrading of their enterprises, the training of the workers, the strengthening of China, and especially the strengthening of Chinese business against Western competition. "In a sense, these organizations were simply an extension of the old idea that in the guilds, masters and journeymen must stand together to protect the craft as a whole" (Chesneaux, 1968: 119).

#### *PRINTING IN CHANGSHA*

Changsha, Hunan, had been an important center of printing in



China before the Western impact and the development of lead type (Udaka, 1926: 180), perhaps because of its lumber industry and its history as an academic center. Even in 1922 one could still find an old wood-block carvers' guild, the Wen Chang Society, named after the god of literature. Its three hundred members were divided into two bang: the Changsha group and the Yongzhou group ("Local News," Shiye zazhi, No. 69 [July 1923]: 2). Even compared to other handicraft workers in Changsha, they worked for extremely low wages and for very long hours, and the whole craft was in a state of decline brought about by the adoption of movable lead-type printing (Udaka, 1926: 180).<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, the modern printing establishments in Changsha appeared to be prospering. In 1922 there were thirteen modern printing firms in the city (Udaka, 1926: 180) and five major periodicals. Hunan ribao (Hunan Daily News) was identified as a government paper under the control of the warlord Zhao Hengti. Dagong bao (The Impartial), on the other hand, was clearly a part of the "democratic" revolution.<sup>2</sup> The editorial positions of Changsha qingnian (Changsha Youth — a weekly), Jiaoyu zazhi (Education Magazine — a monthly), and Chu bao (Hunan Report) are unclear (China Year Book, 1921-1922, p. 109).

During the May Fourth movement these Changsha newspapers had been involved in politics. The warlord Zhang Jingyao had forbidden them to print any news of the Versailles settlement or of the movement which developed in China protesting that settlement. One of the papers (unspecified) was sympathetic to the student protests and thus defied the ban. When it continued to publish news of demonstrations and strikes, the warlord closed it down. In protest, the other newspapers shut down as well (HNLSZL, 1959: No. 1, 3). Dagong bao, in particular, involved itself in the various causes of the national revolutionary movement. An active supporter of the New Culture movement and various other patriotic campaigns, it also printed news of the workers' movement, using copy that was often prepared by Mao Zedong, then head of the Hunan Labor Secretariat (Li Rui, 1957: 220).<sup>3</sup>

### THE UNION

Printers, like mechanics, seem to have been among the first in Hunan to form a class-delineated union. In 1920, in the wake of a strike for higher wages, they established the Hunan Printers' Union

(Hunan yinshua gonghui), a "new-style" union that excluded employers (Udaka, 1926: 174; CEB, 1925: VI, No. 215 [April 4], 187) and included both lead-type printers and lithographers (CEB, 1925: VII, No. 250 [December 5], 320). In fact, it seems to have been one of the earliest unions with Communist affiliations. One author reports that after the printers established this union in 1920, they went on to organize workers' unions in each profession one after the other. "...And sixteen of these new-style unions have formed the [Communist-led] Hunan Federation of Labor Organizations" (Udaka, 1926: 174). Another source seconds this description by adding that it was "the leading factor" and the "moving spirit" of the federation (CEB, 1925: VI, No. 215 [April 4] 187). And there is one source that claims it was Mao Zedong himself who organized this union.<sup>4</sup>

Remarkably, Communist historians are quite vague about this union's origins. One likely explanation is that the union was founded before the Communist organizers had truly set up their own organization — while the anarchist-led Hunan Labor Association still dominated the Hunanese movement — and that Mao organized the Printers' Union while it was still under anarchist auspices. It is quite clear that printers were active in the anarchist association (Ma, 1942: 152). Furthermore, when Mao's attempt to reform the anarchist association by reorganizing its cells into more structured industrial unions is described by Li Rui and other mainland historians, they specifically mention the reorganization under Mao's direction of a printers' union (Li Rui, 1957: 176; JBN, 1959: 425). Then when Li Rui does take up the subject of the printers, he discloses that "at one time" Mao had been the secretary of the union, and that he was "very familiar with the lives of the printers and had a deep understanding of their problems" (Li Rui, 1957: 217). Perhaps a detailed and clear picture of the union's origin would have revealed a much closer association between Mao and the anarchist organization than the Communist historians were willing to admit.

Yet another problem that definitely would have cropped up if the historians had gone into the history of the Hunan Printers' Union was an unseemly split in November 1922 that produced two new unions: the Lithographers' Union and the Lead-type Compositors' and Printers' Union. Communist historians avoid not only the issue of Mao's anarchist association but also the necessity of dwelling on an incident that might be seen as uncomplimentary to the work-

ing class, or at least one that had no pedagogical use. On the other hand, they then had to refrain from mentioning the important role that this union, a union closely tied to Mao, had in the development of the Communist labor movement in Hunan.

This split occurred because the typesetters within the Hunan Printers' Union wanted to go out on strike for higher wages in mid-November 1922, some three weeks after the construction workers had won their strike, but the lithographers did not. This difference of opinion led to a brawl between the two factions at a union meeting on November 15 ("Hunan shiyin gonghui tonggao," November 25, 1922, in HC, Box 6, Pkg. VII, Part 3, Folder 2, Item 5). It appears that the Printers' Union then fell apart, and approximately 300 of the more modern workers<sup>5</sup> went off to form the Lead-type Compositors and Printers' Union. On November 21, they sent their representatives to the managers of the various printing offices demanding an eight-hour day and twelve yuan a month for the skilled typesetters and a "just wage" for the other workers and the men who were contract laborers and piece-work laborers (Li Jui, 1957: 217).

To salvage the situation with the lithographers, a meeting was called at the Xiangxiang Middle School (which Mao had attended) on the night of November 22. A delegation of typesetters apologized for starting the fight and destroying the union. The problem was then resolved by creating a second union, the Lithographers' Union. "The Report of the Hunan Lithographers' Union" (Hunan shiyin gonghui tonggao), issued the following day, emphasized the need for a union. "If there is no organization, then we are just a tray of shifting sand. How can we abolish exploitation and bitterness? Well! Now we have an extremely well-organized body, the Hunan Lithographers' Union." The report also described the apologies of the lead-type compositors and press-operators and, in a very conciliatory tone, explained that in order to remain friends, they would separate. After expressing their regrets that they too could not go on strike along with the lead-type compositors and press-operators, the lithographers assured their readers that the "movement" of the other union had their "absolute sympathy" and that they would be willing to help in any way they could ("Hunan shiyin gonghui tonggao," in HC, Box 6, Pkg. VII, Pt. 3, Folder 2, Item 5).

Why the lithographers were unwilling to go out on strike, aside from the reason they expressed in the report (that there was insufficient time for preparations) was probably related to a lack of

differentiation within their ranks. The lead-type compositors and printers were modern workers — indeed, workers who had been created by the reintroduction of movable type into China — and except for the limited use of a form of contract labor, their relationship to the employers was strictly a cash relationship. Lithographers, on the other hand, still worked in small shops (capitalized at \$400 to \$2,000), and the relationship between the proprietor and the workers was close. Frequently the masters (who still worked) were relatives of their employees. Furthermore, the men who etched the designs into the stone were relatively well paid, and those who ran the power-driven presses were paid more than lead-type compositors. Although the handpress operators in the lithography shops were rather poorly paid, the proprietors continued to raise their wages, sometimes quite considerably, to keep the wages in line with the rising cost of living (CEB, 1925: VI, No. 221 [May 16], 321). In other words, these masters still were fulfilling their traditional obligations, and the lithographers were unwilling to strike against them.

#### *WORKING CONDITIONS*

Printers in China during the 1920s could be found working under any of three systems: the elite were paid a set monthly wage, some were paid according to a piecework system, and some were contract laborers. In Shanghai, roughly 30 percent (mostly lithographers) were paid a monthly salary, while most of the contract workers were employed by newspapers. Neither pieceworkers nor contract workers were paid extra for overtime, although monthly salaried workers generally received time and a half pay. The latter two also did not receive as many paid holidays. They usually got six days a year off, with half pay (the October 10 National Holiday, the solar calendar New Year, the winter solstice sacrifice, and three days at the lunar New Year). Like miners, they were furnished with, and charged for, dilapidated dormitories. During busy seasons, they sometimes worked an eleven or twelve hour day (Liao Weimin, 1920: 17-22).<sup>6</sup>

About 70 percent of the lead-type printers employed by the thirteen houses in Changsha were compositors, while the rest were employed to operate the presses. The compositors could be further divided into those who set type for newspapers and those who did

other, miscellaneous material. Although the latter, usually called job printers, made somewhat less money than those who set type for newspapers, their working conditions were better. They worked relatively short hours and in the daytime. Newspaper printers often worked very long hours, usually at night (CEB, 1925: VII, No. 250 [December 5], 320). More or less literate, the typesetters were usually under thirty and unmarried. The press operators were divided into the skilled workers, who fed the paper into the machines, and the unskilled who turned the wheels on the presses. These men were generally older and had families to support, and thus they were even more economically disadvantaged than the typesetters (CEB, 1925: VI, No. 221 [May 16], 321).

There were over 400 lithographers in Changsha, divided into those who etched the designs on stone, those who ran power-driven presses, and those who ran manually operated presses. With the exception of about a dozen power-driven machine operators and seventy plate-etchers, the rest were handpress operators. The etchers were the highest paid, followed by the power-driven press operators, and finally the handpress operators (CEB, 1925: VI, No. 221 [May 16], 321).

Wages for Hunanese workers were generally low (Udaka, 1926: 174), and although the printers were somewhat better paid than other handicraft workers in Changsha, they made very little compared to printers in Shanghai or other cities.<sup>7</sup> Salaries ranged between four and eight yuan a month. Even so, they usually did not collect their full wage owing to the numerous "discounts" that they were subject to for room and board (Liao and Liu, 1951: 53). The Chinese Economic Bulletin reported the following:

The food (almost all board with the concern) is coarse. Sleeping quarters are uncomfortable. The neglect to provide sanitary arrangements is very prejudicial to the health of the printers. It is said that about eighty percent die at thirty or thereabouts, and most of them eventually contract consumption (CEB, 1925: VII, No. 250 [December 5], 321).

Further, there were large numbers of apprentices. They worked with no wages for three years, although they did receive free board and lodging. During the first two years they were little more than errand boys; their training actually started in the third year. If the boy did not acquire sufficient skill to pass the examination, he was not allowed to leave, but was supposed to remain there and

work at any wage his employer wanted to pay. It was the judgment of the Chinese Economic Bulletin that "the presence of large numbers of apprentices in the Hunan printing establishments has resulted in a deterioration of printing standards . . ." (CEB, 1925: VII, No. 250 [December 5], 321).

### *THE STRIKE*

After receiving a negative response from the various printing offices, the Lead-type Compositors and Printers' Union sent a letter to the Changsha newspapers, which was published in the November 22, 1922, Dagong bao:

The newspaper community creates and maintains public opinion and has always been sympathetic to labor, a fact which has won our respect. Our humble union prints the various newspapers, and thus we have been of some service to the newspaper community. Our relationship goes very deep; our feelings are close. It is thus fitting that our humble union inform the honorable newspapers of our demands for increased wages and better working conditions, which we have presented to the various companies. We hope that you will adopt a just and impartial stand, so that the just demands of our humble union will be swiftly accomplished (Li Rui, 1957: 217).

The proprietors of the various printing shops all watched to see what would happen at the printing shop of Hunan ribao, the government paper. Zhao Hengti's Secretarial Section (Mishu bu), which had jurisdiction over that press, agreed to increase their wages by only one yuan a month and refused to reduce the working hours. When the private companies observed the events at Hunan ribao, they offered the same settlement, and talks thus broke down (Liao and Liu, 1951: 53-54).

The union decided to go out on strike. According to Liao Zhongkun, who in 1922 was a typesetter at Hunan ribao, Mao Zedong advised them to decide first how they were going to feed and house some 300 workers for the duration of the strike. If that problem were solved, he said, their chances of winning the strike would be good (Liao and Liu, 1951: 54). The necessary arrangements were made; fourteen demands were drawn up ("Local News," Shiye zazhi, No. 62 [December 1922]: 7); and on November 25, 1922, the union went out on strike.<sup>8</sup>

On November 26, 1922, Changsha was without newspapers. According to Liao Zhongkun, "at first, the bosses of the usurping

provincial government ignored us. They thought the presses would only be stopped a few days, and then the workers would be hurting for food and a place to live, and then we would give up" (Liao and Liu, 1951: 54). But owing to the preparations suggested by Mao, they could endure.

After eight or nine days, the public clamor to stop the strike and get the newspapers on the streets once again combined with the intransigence of the union forced Zhao Hengti's hand. The army and the police were called in to try to make the workers go back to work. Zhao also brought together the proprietors of the various private companies and talked of gathering together all the material to be printed and sending it off to Xiangtan, a commercial town upstream from Changsha (Li Rui, 1957: 218; JBN, 1959: 470).

Some of the workers were frightened by the soldiers and police, and by the threat to divert business to Xiangtan. According to Li Rui, Mao persuaded the workers to continue the strike:

Hanging on to this strike means victory. If you back down halfway through, you're finished. Even though the usurping government's army and police want to force you back to work, what can they do if we fight back and hang in there? Even if they say they are going to take all the material and send it to Xiangtan, it won't work. The workers in Xiangtan will just refuse to accept it (Li Rui, 1957: 218).

The clamor over the lack of newspapers continued to grow, and the editorial and production sections of the various newspapers put pressure on the owners of the printing companies to settle, but the owners were taking their cues from Zhao Hengti. Finally, Zhao's staff had exhausted all remedies and, concerned about the long-term absence of newspapers, agreed to negotiate the demands (Li Rui, 1957: 219; JBN, 1959: 470).<sup>9</sup>

The final negotiations leading to the settlement of the printers' strike appear to have been somewhat out of the ordinary. The settlement of the construction workers' strike had been worked out at the provincial government office, while the settlement of the printers' strike was negotiated at the Provincial Education Association. Furthermore, the mediators were no longer solely members of the "upper echelons." During the settlement of the construction workers' strike, a number of the representatives had made reference to the elite nature of the mediators and the fact that the unions' representatives were excluded. Such charges could not have been made against the mediators of the printers' strike.

Over half of the mediators were either officers of or delegates to the Communist-led Hunan Federation of Labor Unions.

Shiye zazhi (Industrial Magazine), a local Changsha journal, listed the mediators in December 1922. The leader of the mediators was Mao Zedong. In addition, three men — Zhang Shenan, Tao Xiaodong, and Zhang Pingzi — represented the newspaper world at the negotiations. Zhang Shenan was made chairman of the negotiations. Lou Shiying represented the railroad industry; Wang Lusheng the machinists; and Zhu Juhe, Chen Heqing, and Liu Zian the lithography industry ("Local News," Shiye zazhi, No. 62 [December 1922]: 7–8). Mao Zedong was the secretary of the Hunan Federation of Labor Organizations, and Lou Shiying, Wang Lusheng, Zhu Juhe, and Chen Heqing were all delegates from their respective unions to that federation ("Hunan quansheng gongtuan lianhehui diyi ci daibiao huiyi yijuean," in HC, Box 6, Pkg. VII, Pt. 3, Folder 2, Item 8).<sup>10</sup> Thus it would appear that the mediators were newspaper staff and members of the federation.

In addition to these obviously partisan mediators, there were at the negotiations a delegation of thirteen representatives from the Lead-type Compositors and Printers' Union and thirteen men representing the thirteen printing houses in Changsha. On December 10 at 1:00 in the afternoon the negotiations began, and by midnight the issues were resolved. With the exception of a demand for early manuscript submissions, all the demands were granted, albeit in revised form. The following is the revised list, signed by the representatives of the union and the printing companies:

#### Demands of the lead-type compositors

1) Newspaper compositors. Two sheets of any large newspaper will count as eight folios (ban). Each folio shall be the job of one person. The standard column shall be 52 lines. The standard line shall be based on No. 5 type. If there are additional lines, they shall be calculated according to the above. In addition, it shall be the job of an additional person to set the advertisements. After any news item is set, it cannot be changed. However, when it must be changed, there shall be an additional charge of 6 cents for every 100 characters. Those compositors who set type for miscellaneous material shall work no more than 8 hours a day. This does not include rest periods. If they must work at night, they are to be paid as in the daytime, plus they must be supplied with food. At night 3½ hours shall be taken as a half-day's work.

2) All newspapers should establish earlier manuscript submission deadlines. With regard to local news, the standard assignment for one person shall be 104 lines. Every 6 fen shall be counted as one line.



3) Newspaper compositors shall receive a monthly wage of 11 yuan, plus food. . . . If a man works less than 10 days in any month, he shall be paid one-half of a month's salary. If a man works more than 10 days he shall be paid one month's salary. If a newspaper closes down, or is closed down by the authorities, this does not apply. Compositors of miscellaneous material shall receive a base pay, in addition to food, of 9 yuan a month. The monthly salary of the section chief shall be twice that amount.

4) Specialized typesetting.<sup>11</sup> Those who do special work shall receive 14 cents for every 1,000 characters. Blanks shall be counted the same as characters. Circles added for emphasis, spacing, punctuation marks, and symbols shall be counted as  $1\frac{1}{2}$  characters. Insertions of English or especially difficult charts shall be negotiated when they arise. Food shall be the responsibility of the companies.

5) Two-fifteenths of a company's profits shall be divided among all the workers. This, however, does not apply to employees who have worked less than 6 full months.

6) Compositors of miscellaneous materials. [Each year] work begins on the sixth day of the first month, and ends on December 26. However, if owing to unusual circumstances men must work, they must be paid double wages during this period. The first and fifteenth of the lunar month shall be holidays. Wages cannot be held back. If there is work on either of these two days, double wages must be paid.

7) For one year, beginning on the day this document is signed, the companies cannot hire any additional apprentices.

#### Demands of the Printers

1) Contract printers of large newspapers. Any sheet of a large newspaper shall be counted as two sheets. The monthly contract price shall be 22 yuan. This applies to any number of copies from 100 to 1,000. If the number exceeds 1,000, the price for additional copies shall be 70 percent of the original price.

2) Printers of small newspapers. Any sheet of a small newspaper shall be counted as one sheet. The monthly contract price shall be 10 yuan. This applies to any number of copies from 100 to 1,000. If the number exceeds 1,000, the price for the additional copies shall be 50 percent of the original price. If there is any miscellaneous material requiring double-printing, the price will be subject to negotiation as the occasion arises.

3) Machine operators. They shall receive a monthly wage of 10 yuan.

4) Cart shakers.<sup>12</sup> They shall receive a monthly wage of 5 yuan.

5) Whether or not a person is contract labor, the company is responsible for the person's food. Apprentices and night workers among the printers are covered by the provisions of this agreement in the section on compositors.

Demands of both groups

- 1) If a company fires a worker, it must publish a reason. Workers may not be fired because of this strike.
- 2) Wages and food for the period from November 26 through November 30 must be supplied as usual. [ This period includes the first four days of the strike. Since the workers returned to work December 11, they would be able to put in 10 days work in December, thus qualifying for a full month's wage] ("Local News," Shiye zazhi, No. 62 [December 1922]: 7-8).

Because there is no available copy of the original demands, it is impossible to determine precisely what was conceded. It is clear that the compositors had originally demanded 12 yuan (Li Jui, 1957: 217), and thus the figure of 11 yuan represents a compromise. Nevertheless, it also represents an increase of 3 yuan in the highest wage paid to a printer, an increase of 37.5 percent. The compositors of miscellaneous material won an eight-hour day, and since the amount of work that could be assigned to one newspaper compositor was limited, one assumes that their working hours were also thus limited. A British consular report indicates that all lead-type compositors worked an eight-hour day (Great Britain, Foreign Office, 1925: 31). Interestingly enough, the printers demanded and received an agreement that no new apprentices be hired for at least one year. Although there is no explanation in the sources of why this demand was made, it might have been related to the allegation that printing standards had deteriorated owing to the use of unqualified apprentices (CEB, 1925: VII, No. 250 [December 5], 321). It is possible that the union was concerned about the quality of printing in Changsha, but it is more likely that the skilled workers were threatened by the increasing use of unskilled labor and barely paid labor. The union was, no doubt, pleased with the settlement. All sources refer to this strike as a complete success (for example, "Shengxian xia zhi Hunan," 1923: 76), and in the summer of 1923 one analysis of unions in Hunan described the Lead-type Compositors and Printers' Union as "completely organized and relatively powerful" ("Shengxian xia zhi Hunan," 1923: 74).

**POSTSTRIKE EVENTS**

Shortly after the successful conclusion of the strike, the lead-

type compositors and printers assembled at the office of the Hunan Federation of Labor Organizations at the Xiangxiang Middle School. Two workers, both employed by the Tongyi Printing Company, were elected as general representative and secretary. Sheng Zhongping, the new general representative, had been the head of the thirteen-man union delegation at the negotiations, and Tan Yingzhu, the new secretary ("Local News," Shiye zazhi, No. 62 [December 1922]: 7-8), was, curiously enough, also the secretary of the Lithographers' Union ("Hunan shiye gonghui tonggao," in HC, Box 6, Pkg. VII, Pt. 3, Folder 2, Item 3). This meeting also selected a general affairs manager, a treasurer, and a number of marshals. Workers from each printing house were allowed one representative on a coordinating committee ("Local News," Shiye zazhi, No. 62 [December 1922]: 7). Plans for a night school were discussed, and each worker contributed one yuan to start a consumers' cooperative (CEB, 1925: VI, No. 221 [May 16], 321).

The lead-type compositors and printers went back to work on December 12, and the newspapers came out again on the thirteenth. But on that day, the Changsha Dagong bao, previously a supporter of labor demands, ran an editorial that attracted Mao's attention. Li Rui selected a few excerpts from the article, entitled, "A Few Comments in the Wake of the Printers' Strike":

We are not saying that this printers' strike was completely unreasonable, but merely that we do not believe that a strike was really necessary. . . . I would advise the printing workers, by all means, to do a little fundamental study in the future . . . so that they will not be incited by others and will not be sacrificed in other people's experiments. You must study more. With a little bit of learning you might solve all kinds of problems in the future (Li Rui, 1957: 219).

The editor pointed out three weaknesses that the workers were displaying. Their demand for earlier manuscript submissions was evidence of a "lack of common sense." His second concern was the "failure to maintain order." "In the future the workers will have a hard time avoiding becoming overconfident because of this victory, and thus becoming insolent. The population is increasing every day, and they will attract a motley crowd. Even if there are more and more marshals, one fears that they will not be able to maintain order" (Li Rui, 1957: 219).

The third weakness was that the workers were "unaware of health measures." From the context it would appear that the union had blamed the workers' poor health on the night work required to

put out a newspaper. The editor, however, maintained that their poor health was owing to a lack of exercise. "The daily routine of students is also quite long, but they exercise, and thus their bodies are in good health" (Li Rui, 1957: 219).

The editor concluded with his suggestions:

In all sincerity, I would suggest to you workers that if you desire to be independent [nenggou zili], you must eliminate these obvious weaknesses. You must acquire a certain amount of knowledge. Knowledge comes from learning, so you must emphasize learning. And how are you to acquire learning? You must go right away to the night schools. No matter what, you must set aside an hour or two every day for classes and exercise... (Li Rui, 1957: 220).

The editor also advised "those who are involved in the labor movement" that they should not be content with the victory, which would only foster arrogance, but should put greater emphasis on the workers' education.

According to Li Rui, Mao Zedong was very concerned and perhaps even agitated when he saw the Dagong bao editorial. Even more important than his own personal relationship with the paper's editor was the paper's role among Changsha's intellectual circles. As a spokesman for the "national democratic" revolution, and an active supporter of the New Culture movement and the Drive Out Zhang Jingyao campaign, the newspaper was taken to represent the attitudes of a significant portion of the local urban population. Because the paper had supported his causes in the past, this criticism, particularly the veiled criticism of Mao personally — "those who are involved in the labor movement" — seems to have angered Mao.<sup>13</sup>

On December 14, 1922, the Changsha Dagong bao (living up to its name, The Impartial), printed Mao's reply:

Nowadays, in this society, the workers, peasants, and students seem to be "those who are to be taught," while the gentlemen of the long gowns are those who will teach us the "Principles of Great Knowledge and Great Learning...."

It is not that the workers and peasants are unwilling to learn from others, but those who are to be teachers must abide by the following three points:

1) We hope that those who lecture us can come stand where we stand to teach us. We don't need any taskmaster, but someone who will get down off his high horse and be our friend. Moreover, we don't need anyone who starts off his lecture with "you workers," "a lack of common sense," "failure to maintain order,"

[etc.] ... Instead one should say, "All of us..." Only that will do. Gentlemen, can you really, sincerely, help us? Can you, in all sincerity, advise us? If you can, we will be quite willing to shake hands with you. Please, right now, put out your hand, and no more of this "you" and "we" business, muddling along as if "we" are officials, and "you" are "your most miserable servant, who deserves to die."

2) Anyone who wants to teach us must know his facts and examine them carefully. We don't need sand-spitting demons who thrive on character assassination. If we were to say that your honorable newspaper was getting a monthly payoff from some private person, would you accept that? And we ask you, with regard to your remarks, "no longer should you be manipulated by others — don't be sacrificed in the experiments of others," gentlemen, what sources are you quoting from? What kind of evidence do you have? Please give us a prompt reply. We hope that in the future the reporters will spend a bit more time verifying their comments. Otherwise, it is all a farce.

3) Those who wish to lecture us must step down from their lofty positions and truly teach us. That we workers need to have learning is quite true. We workers are quite willing to accept educated people who can step forward and be our friends. The gentleman says that we are manipulated, that we are sacrificial lambs. The gentleman feels sorry for us. So he should come to be a true leader for us. We would be delighted if the gentleman could really take off his long scholar's gown and quit his job as editor, and help us carry on the labor movement. At least he could be a true educator of labor, and never more stand on the sidelines. What is this "And thus I proceed in all sincerity to advise those of you who are involved in the labor movement"? Gentleman! The only ones whom we can see to be our good friends are those who have sacrificed their own position, who can bear the hunger and suffering and look out for the interests of the majority of us workers. Will the gentleman honor us with a visit? Please, come on, take off that scholar's gown!

... For now we will forget about the question of night work. But I ask you, when can the workers find time to attend these extension schools and study? Are you suggesting that they have some special talent such that they can be in two places at once? Moreover, in the city of Changsha, how many night schools are there, anyway? Before you speak, why don't you do a little bit of careful investigation? Now we realize that unless the working hours are reduced, there is no chance for us to study, and that unless we have our own organization and our own night school, we won't have a place to study. We wanted to reduce the work hours, but the employers refused; we wanted unity, but some people tried to destroy that unity; therefore we have to have a movement. We want to insure that we have the benefits of study, but some people say that we shouldn't have such benefits. We want to find leaders who will be our friends, but now, gentleman, some people are saying that we are being manipulated. We are "sacrificial lambs." Moreover, you say our leaders are "experimenters." All right, we would ask the one who is now making so many suggestions to come help us, but he insists on wearing his scholar's gown, so he can't come. Gentlemen, please, why don't

you come help us think of a more clever way to seek our education! You might spare us the trouble of being constantly lectured by others. With regard to night work, you said that insofar as health is concerned, there is no problem. Quite right! The men who edit the paper work at night; government officials, politicians, and members of the legislature all work at night. And so why are they all so fat and happy? Because we not only work at night, but during the day as well. We cannot come crawling out of our beds at noon. Furthermore, we cannot afford to eat meat. The laborers, because they are undernourished, or because their work is strenuous, often damage their health. The only remedy for a poor man is to sleep — to rest a while. Do you realize that you want us who are manual laborers — who work with our physical strength — after we have exhausted ourselves at work, to come home and go through all the motions — hup two three four, hup two three four — and exercise. Are you trying to kill us? These two problems which you have brought up — the night work and exercise — words are not enough to answer you. We are not going to say anything more about it, but we would still exhort you — you really have read too many books! We would like to ask you to come with us and get a little taste of working for a living (Li Rui, 1957: 221-223).

Although at least one of the printing establishments struck was not an organ of the liberal and nationalist reformers — the provincial government's own printing shop which published Hunan ribao — many of them were. And if Dagong bao is typical, they clearly had lost their enthusiasm for labor reform as it was being pursued by Mao and the other Communist organizers. This strike was expensive, not only in terms of the impact it had on liberal support for the labor movement, but also in terms of jobs. A number of printing houses were forced to shut down. They simply could not pay what the workers demanded. The newspapers, too, paid. Their monthly printing costs went up at least fifty or sixty yuan ("Local News," Shiye zazhi, No. 62 [December 1922]: 7). And the newspapers in Changsha, particularly Dagong bao, had been at the forefront of the national democratic movement. This strike was a direct attack on one of the most strategic sectors of the national bourgeoisie.

None of this appears to have made any difference to Mao. In the face of criticism from Dagong bao, Mao did not temporize, but came back with a strongly worded, sarcastic, and provocative rebuttal of all charges made against the union, the workers, and the organizers. And he rejected all the liberal solutions to the workers' problems.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>According to Udaka, their wages were 1,500-5,000 cash per month, or roughly 50-166 cash per day, less than half what the construction workers had received after their first strike in 1918. According to (Wang Qingbin et al., eds., 1928: Part I, 605-606), when business was good, they worked seven-teen or eighteen hours a day with no breaks. During slow periods they might work only four or five hours a day or go several days without work. The average for spring and winter was fourteen hours per day, for fall and summer at most eleven hours.

<sup>2</sup>The Changsha Dagong bao had no connection to the more famous newspaper of the same name in Tianjin.

<sup>3</sup>It is quite apparent in the occasional footnotes of Li Rui, and of the JBN, that much of their material comes from Dagong bao. This writer also suspects that much of the English-language news of Changsha strikes, such as the short items appearing in the "News from Central China" column of the Weekly Review of the Far East and in the Chinese Economic Bulletin, was taken from Dagong bao. For example, in the CEB article on Changsha printers (November 5, 1925), the writer comments, "The printers have also neglected to take proper care of their own health." This is a rather strange remark, but closely parallels the Dagong bao editorial (cited by Li Rui, 1957: 219, and reproduced below) in which the writer lists a number of the workers' weaknesses, one of which was that they were "unaware of health measures."

<sup>4</sup>(Chesneaux, 1968: 179). This writer has not been able to locate the source cited by Chesneaux: Yang Shaoying, Zhongguo gongren de bagong douzheng, Shanghai, 1957, pp. 10-12. As cited in Chesneaux, the source is problematic, since Yang apparently dated the printers' strike as April 1922, not November.

<sup>5</sup>Estimates of the number of printers in this union vary from 256 (CEB, 1925: VII, No. 250 [December 5], 320) to 350 ("Shengxian xia zhi Hunan," p. 74). The estimate of 256 has the appeal of exactness; however, the same publication some eight months earlier (CEB, 1925: VI, [April 4], 187) had given the number as 300. Most sources use this number, and owing to fluctuations in the number of apprentices and the question of whether or not they were counted, this writer has chosen to follow the majority and use a round number.

<sup>6</sup>An excerpt from the Chinese text and a French translation is given in Chesneaux, (1965: 91-101). The contract system existed among Cantonese printers as well. Anna Louise Strong (1935: 89) quotes Ma Zhoufan, twenty-six years old in 1927, who had paid \$15.00 to become an apprentice in a printing shop. Working without wages for the duration of the apprenticeship, he had been promised \$10.00 a month on graduation. Instead, his foreman paid him only \$1.00 a month, plus his food. "This was due to the contracting system. . . . Ever since that day I have fought that system. The foreman was paid for the work of all the workers and gave to the workers themselves only what he was compelled to give, keeping the rest." Ge Gongzhen also comments on the avaricious nature of contractors among the printers (See Ge Gongzhen, 1955: 26. This is a reprint of a book originally published in 1927).

<sup>7</sup>For example, the wages of Tianjin printers ranged from 12 to 18 yuan a month. See Ma, 1955: 16. The average Shanghai printer earned from 9 to 30

yuan per month (Wang Qingbin et al., 1928: Part I, 264-265).

<sup>8</sup>Chesneaux (1968: 179) states that this strike occurred in April 1922, citing Yang Shaoying, Zhongguo gongren bagong douzheng (Shanghai, 1957). This writer has been unable to locate Yang's study. However, the same date is given by Liao and Liu (1951: 53). The latter described the date as the third lunar month of 1922, which could be interpreted as April. However, the evidence for a November date is overwhelming. It is given by Li Rui (1957: 218), citing the Changsha Dagong bao, and by JBN (1959: 470), and it is confirmed by the Hunan Lithographers' Union Report, a document circulated in Changsha in November 1922 which is preserved in the Huston Collection (Box 6, Pkg. VII, Pt. 3, Folder 2, Item 5) and by Shiye zazhi, No. 62 (December 1922): 7. Furthermore, the American consul in Changsha at the time also gives the date of this strike as November 22 (the date that the demands were presented, according to Li Rui, but not the beginning of the strike). See correspondence of C. D. Meinhardt to Stuart J. Fuller dated February 23, 1922, in Records of Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State (RG 84), Changsha, 1923, 850.4.

<sup>9</sup>JBN tends to minimize Zhao Hengti's role and emphasize the capitulation of "the capitalist side."

<sup>10</sup>This document is dated January 2, 1923, and lists the names of the delegates to the meeting. Two of the names are not exactly identical to those of the mediators, but it is the judgment of this writer that they are indeed the same people. The January 2, 1923, document lists the name of Lou Shiying as Lu Shiying, and the name of Wang Lusheng as Wang Lusun. The identification of two of the three lithographers as workers is possible since their names appear in the "Hunan shiying gonghui tonggao" (dated November 23, 1922) in HC, Box 6, Pkg. VII, Pt. 3, Folder 2, Item 5.

<sup>11</sup>The Chinese term here is fahuo jianhuan. Literally it means to distribute the goods and inspect their return. What it means in this context is unclear. This writer has therefore created a section head that corresponds to the content of the demand.

<sup>12</sup>The Chinese is yaoche (rocking, or shaking, carts). In the English language press this category was simply described as "unskilled labor" among the printers. See CEB, 1925: VII, No. 250 [December 5], 320.

<sup>13</sup>The writer of this editorial signed his name as "Dun," which is obviously a pseudonym (See Li Rui, 1957: 219). The literal meaning of dun is shield, and in modern Chinese it most often occurs in the compound maodun, literally spear-shield. This compound means "contradiction" and derives its meaning from a story in which a man boasted that he could both make a shield which no spear could pierce, and a spear which no shield could stop. The mao which means spear is pronounced exactly the same as Mao's name. Thus it is possible that the choice of this pseudonym was intended to point to the "contradiction" between Mao and "Dun." It is unclear whether or not the editor who wrote this criticism was the editor-in-chief Long Jiangong, an associate of Mao's in 1920.



## The Shuikoushan Lead and Zinc Miners' Strike

Some three months after the Anyuan miners and railroad workers' strike, the more than 3,000 members of the Shuikoushan Lead and Zinc Miners' Club went out on strike. This strike, which lasted from December 5 until December 27, 1922, took place in a mine owned and operated by the Hunan provincial government. Directly influenced by the September victory at Anyuan, the Shuikoushan strike resembled the earlier one in many respects. Like Anyuan, the club was organized and directed by Communists, and although it was destroyed only one year after it was founded, many of the miners at Shuikoushan, like those from Anyuan, found their way into the Communist Fourth Army after the Nationalist-Communist Party split in 1927 (Li Rui, 1957: 216). Yet, in at least one respect, the Shuikoushan union was unique: in 1923 it spawned the first peasant union in Hunan, thus providing a small hint of things to come.

### *THE MINE*

Shuikoushan is situated in Changning xian, Hunan, about 45 miles south of Hengyang. Sitting astride the confluence of the Xiang and Zhao rivers, the area in 1922 was easily accessible only by boat (Dingle, 1917: 46).<sup>1</sup> The lead and zinc deposits there were the richest in all of China and had been mined by traditional or "native" methods for hundreds of years (Pacific Development Corporation Report, 1920: 1). It was not until 1895 that the Hunan provincial government acquired all the property within a radius of 5.2 miles from the mine's main shaft and placed it under the supervision of the Hunan Mining Bureau. After the installation of modern equipment, the mine produced some 50,000 tons of lead concentrate and more than 126,000 tons of zinc concentrate over the next twenty years.

Both lead and zinc are among the most important modern commercial metals, and both have been mined since ancient times. The Egyptians used lead coins or medallions and the Romans used lead pipes to construct their urban water systems. Although the ancients, both east and west, used zinc compounds to produce bronze, the extraction of pure metallic zinc up until the eighteenth century was a secret of the Orient, and zinc entered world trade routes under the misnomer of "Malabar tin."

Zinc was most often used to galvanize iron or steel in the early part of this century, providing a protective coating against atmospheric corrosion. After the advent of the automobile, zinc became essential to the die-casting process as an alloy added to metals before they were poured to make radiator grills, carburetors, fuel pumps, shock absorbers, door handles, and so forth. Lead was principally used in the manufacture of storage batteries and electric cable. Lesser amounts were used in the production of glass, glazes, and gasoline (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1969: XIII, 840-844, and XXIII, 967-972).<sup>2</sup>

China, of course, during this period did not have a large, modern metallurgical industry which could absorb the lead and zinc produced at Shuikoushan. Yet some of the production was used within the country. Zinc was used to make pigments, varnishes, and medicine and as an alloy in the manufacture of copper coins. In Hunan, lead was used primarily in the manufacture of household utensils, although in Shanghai it was used in the production of lead pipe. Nevertheless, the bulk of the metal mined at Shuikoushan found its way to Europe (Dingle, 1917: 47; *CEB*, 1925: No. 216 [April 11], 213; *CEB*, 1925: No. 217 [April 18], 234).

There were two main shafts at Shuikoushan. One, some 600 feet deep, was still worked in the traditional manner. The second was modern. Its main shaft sank 650 feet into the earth, and off of it were four working levels. Below the main shaft, a 160-foot vertical pit descended to the fifth and sixth levels. A 50-horsepower steam-driven hoist at the incline shaft lifted the ore out, assisted by a 15-horsepower hoist underground (Pacific Development Corporation Report, 1920: 3; Wheeler, 1915: 134-138; Dingle, 1917: 46).

The most common of the zinc ores is known variously as zinc sulfide, zinc blend, or sphalerite, and it is now used to produce 90 percent of the world's metallic zinc. It is almost always found along with galena, the sulfide of lead. Because the cost of refining zinc is so high, metal producers have always demanded a high-

grade concentrate, and thus the separation of the zinc and lead concentrates at the mine was a necessity (Encyclopedia Britannica, 1969: XXIII, 967-972). At Shuikoushan the ore was rough-sorted underground and then cobbled and close-sorted at the surface. The zinc and lead concentrates were then separated by hand jigging. This traditional Chinese way was just as effective as any modern method, but slower. The galena and zinc ores were separated as much as possible with hand-held hammers. The smaller pieces were then placed in wooden barrels with bamboo sieves. The barrel was filled with water and rotated until the separation was accomplished (Wheeler, 1915: 136; Dingle, 1917: 47).

After separation, a two-foot gauge railroad moved the concentrates to the small river port town of Songbai,<sup>3</sup> where they were loaded onto junks and carried downstream for delivery in Changsha. Before World War I the bulk of the product was sold under contract to Messrs. Carlowitz and Company of Hankou and to two other German firms. The concentrates were then taken to Wuchang where they were retreated and shipped to Europe (Wheeler, 1915: 136; Pacific Development Corporation Report, 1920: 4-5).

The war years, particularly 1915 and 1916, were especially productive ones for the mine, and the revenue reaped by the provincial government was reinvested in the mine. Preoccupied with activities at home, the Europeans' role in Asia diminished, and China's exports grew remarkably faster than her imports, with the one exception of the import of capital goods for her industries (Wheeler, 1915: 134-138).<sup>4</sup> The Shuikoushan mine was in a particularly advantageous position. Its prewar contracts had been with German companies, and thus the war wiped out any obligations it otherwise would have had.

The export of lead ore from Hunan during 1916 increased enormously, doubtless stimulated by the high prices ruling for lead, shipments being double those of any previous year. The shipments all represented lead ore sold by the Hunan government in the open market, and were no longer the mining output handed over to foreign merchants in fulfillment of contracts (Dingle, 1917: 46).

The early wartime profits were used to purchase modern European-style jigs and wilfrey tables, devices which increased the speed at which the zinc and lead ores could be separated (Dingle, 1917: 46; JBN, 1959: 386-389; CEB, 1926: No. 216 [April 11], 213). But no sooner had the capital improvements been made

than the market fell out from under them. As the war progressed, the available shipping capacity fell off, and the ores began to accumulate. The Hunan government was still selling accumulated ores as late as 1922 and 1923 (CEB, 1925: No. 221 [May 16], 279).

The early war years were, thus, an aberration. The basic problems of capital shortages and a highly limited domestic market remained. With little or no domestic market, the Shuikoushan mine was in a position very similar to that of the Hanyeping Company. As mentioned earlier, the Hanyeping Company had signed a loan agreement in 1913 which stipulated that it sell 600,000 tons of iron ore to Japan every year at about half the market price.<sup>5</sup> The bonanza of 1915 and 1916 was possible only because the Shuikoushan mine was able to avoid the obligations incurred by a 1912 contract with Messrs. Carlowitz and Company in which it had promised to deliver 100,000 tons of lead and zinc ore over a six-year period, in return for a loan of 1 million taels (Pacific Development Corporation Report, 1920: 5; "Zinc and Lead in China," 1915: 290).

Once the international market declined owing to the shortage of shipping capacity, the Shuikoushan mine faced serious problems. The number of miners was cut back several times, and in September 1920 the mine shut down altogether (JBN, 1959: 386-389). The mine operated at a very minimal level during 1921, but in 1922 production began to climb back to near normal levels. Japanese and British purchasers had assumed the former role of the Carlowitz company (JBN, 1959: 388; United States Government, Records of Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State [RG 84] Changsha, 1923 [C-8]).<sup>6</sup>

With the exception of the early war years, the mine was not particularly lucrative. One author, the agent of a prospective American buyer, suggested that costs were excessive "chiefly on account of many unnecessary officials." In 1919 the mine employed five directors, a manager, a superintendent, a mill man, three chemists, two field men, and one engineer (Pacific Development Corporation Report, 1920: 23). One Communist writer has also suggested that these men were often only bureaucrats — political appointees and friends and relatives of the provincial warlord (Ming, 1958: 34). Whatever their administrative or technical skills, the estimated cost of administration in 1919 was \$7.00 per ton of sorted ore, or 36 percent of the total operating budget (Pacific Development Corporation Report, 1920: 1). Their individual

salary scale is charted below.

Estimated Monthly Administrative Expenses at Shuikoushan

(in Chinese dollars or yuan)

Title	Number	Salary/person	Total salary
Manager	1	1,000	1,000
Superintendent	1	500	500
Directors	5	300	1,500
Millman	1	300	300
Chemist	1	250	250
Chemist	2	125	250
Fieldmen	2	250	500
Engineer	1	400	400
Miscellaneous*			<u>2,800</u>
		Total:	8,000

\*This category includes office personnel, mechanics, foremen, and various supplies. Thus it probably refers to the salaries of those persons directly employed, rather than contracted labor.

Source: Pacific Development Corporation Report, 1920: 23.

The second most expensive item in the budget was six small steam pumps and the two hoists, which cost \$5.12 per ton to operate, or about 26 percent of total costs. In this case the problem was the high cost of coal, which was related to the "primitive way in which it is mined, hoisted, and transported." The actual mining, the extraction process at Shuikoushan, consumed about 18 percent of the budget (\$3.78 per ton); sorting and concentrating took 14 percent (\$2.67 per ton); and transportation required only about 4 percent (\$0.73 per ton) (Pacific Development Corporation Report, 1920: 5, 14, 15). Thus the total cost per ton was \$19.30.

Yet another explanation of the poor performance of Chinese mines in general, and Shuikoushan in particular, is given by Boris P. Torgasheff's analysis of labor efficiency in China.<sup>7</sup> Torgasheff suggests that these companies could not compete well on the international market precisely because of their low paid labor. Even though their wage bill was exceedingly low, they gained no competitive advantage because insufficient mechanization, obsolete administration, and the illiterate and unhealthy state of the miners combined to produce very little product. In China's most modern metal mines, the efficiency of her labor was no more than 4 percent of that in American mines (Torgasheff, 1930: VI, 520). Even compared to the efficiency of zinc mines in French Indochina, the

Shuikoushan mine was 30 percent less efficient (Torgasheff, 1930: VI, 523-524). China's backwardness made her product relatively expensive.

### THE WORKERS

Torgasheff relates the poor efficiency of Chinese labor in part to the "insufficiency of wages which are a bare starvation minimum" (Torgasheff, 1930: VI, 399). Fortunately, there are relatively good statistics on the wages of the 3,000 workers at Shuikoushan.<sup>8</sup> The official rates are charted below.

#### Official Wage Rates for Eight Hours Work at Shuikoushan

(in Chinese dollars or yuan)

Title	Wage
Underground labor	
Rock drillers	0.25
Pumping coolies (bamboo pumps)	0.15
Miners	0.18
Fan coolies	0.18
Surface labor	
Carpenters	0.16-0.30
Bamboo-makers	0.14-0.18
Masons	0.16-0.30
Painters	0.16-0.30
Fitters	0.30-0.60
No. 1 fitters	0.90-1.50
Dressing coolies	0.10-0.30
Sundry coolies	0.10-0.15

(Pacific Development Corporation Report, 1920: 34)

The workers, however, did not receive all of the above wages. Like Anyuan, most of the Shuikoushan miners were contract laborers, and these figures were the official rates paid to the contractors, who then paid the workers. The contractor, according to sanctified tradition, was entitled to keep between 10 and 20 percent of the wage for his services as contractor. In addition, he might deduct 30 to 50 percent of the official amount to cover the cost of meals and lodging which he provided. In his function as moneylender, he could deduct a few more cents for interest on advances given. The worker might end up with about half the official

rate (Torgasheff, 1930: VI, 535-537). Thus when Communist writers describe the wages of the average Shuikoushan miner as "a few cents a day" (Li Rui, 1957: 211), there is no discrepancy. They generally are referring to the worker's real wage, as opposed to his official wage. Their allegations that the workers were unable to support their parents, "much less a wife and children," and that those with cotton clothes and coarse food were considered well off (Ming, 1958: 34) also seem plausible, given these wages.

### *THE STRIKE*

The only detailed account of the December 1922 strike at Shuikoushan is one written by a member of the Labor Secretariat, Ming Fei.<sup>9</sup> He was sent to Shuikoushan in 1923 especially for this purpose, to write the story of the strike so that people "would know about it and not think it illegal." The report was written in September and published in Shanghai by the Chinese Labor Secretariat in November 1923 (Ming, 1958: 27-28). It is unfortunate that this is the only reasonably complete account, for it is, of course, a partisan one. On the other hand, it is valuable insofar as it reveals the perceptions and attitudes of the young Communists involved in organizing workers at Shuikoushan, the people who told their story to Ming Fei.

The Shuikoushan strike was seen as part of the general strike wave of 1922 which began with the Hong Kong seamen's strike in January (Ming, 1958: 30).<sup>10</sup> More immediately, it was seen as a product of the September 1922 strike in the Anyuan coal mines. Most of the miners at Shuikoushan were from the nearby Hengyang area, and some of the miners at Anyuan were also from that area. There had been limited contact between workers at the two mines for some time, and the news of the successful Anyuan strike reached Shuikoushan quickly.

Those workers who responded most enthusiastically were, interesting enough, the machinists (Ming, 1958: 31). Machinists were, as a rule, not contract labor. They were usually highly skilled, better paid workers employed directly by the mining administration.<sup>11</sup> Although there is no suggestion that the machinists at Shuikoushan had belonged to the Mechanics' Union, the machinists in Anyuan had originally belonged, and the parallel activist role of the machinists at both mines is an intriguing coincidence.

About a dozen machinists gathered to discuss forming an organ-

ization along the lines of the Anyuan Club. Liu Dongsheng, Chen Meisheng, Liu Qisheng, Luo Tongxi, Jiao Congyun, Peng Wener, Liu Houan, Liu Shuilin, and Li Baohua were among those who met secretly for almost two weeks to discuss how this could be done. In the end, they decided to ask the Anyuan Club for help. It was their judgment that without funds or experience, and confronted with the prospect of mass intimidation and fear, they could not organize a club without outside assistance. In the traditional manner, they took up a collection to provide Liu Dongsheng with travel money to Anyuan (Ming, 1958: 32).

Liu Dongsheng met with Liu Shaoqi and Li Lisan. They agreed to send some of the Anyuan Club members to Shuikoushan. Thus in the autumn of 1922, Jiang Xianyun, Xie Huaide, Feng Dusheng, and Li Qingyu arrived in Shuikoushan.<sup>12</sup> Both Jiang, a student, and Xie, a miner, were from nearby Hengyang xian (Li Rui, 1957: 212). The homes of the others are not known.

After Liu Dongsheng departed for Anyuan, rumors began circulating that the Shuikoushan machinists were going to organize a club in order to increase wages and "overthrow the management." The manager of the Shuikoushan mine, Zhao Mingding, was in Changsha at the time and thus the staff took the situation in hand. Director Huang, the head of the General Management Section, and Director Tang, the head of the Mining Operations Section, called a meeting of all foremen and workers in order to issue the following statement:

Of course, you workers may form organizations, but all of the workers' organizations around at the moment are perverse perpetrators of violence. Shuikoushan is managed by the province of Hunan and therefore certainly will not allow the workers to carry on just any way they feel like. Today, in all sincerity, I warn you: I hope you will not listen to these outside agitators. We have heard that some people at Anyuan have come here. In order to maintain this outfit's production, we have already sent countless people out to every site to keep an eye on things. If the people at Shuikoushan still are not persuaded and are still thinking of organizing one of these "clubs," this office will deal severely with them. If there are any people here from Anyuan, they will be seized immediately and prosecuted (Ming, 1958: 31).

According to Ming Fei, this speech by the directors was sufficient to dissuade the majority of miners from expressing any interest in clubs. They would not so much as utter the word. It was to this rather unpromising atmosphere that the four organizers from Anyuan came, and Liu Dongsheng returned. The original



core of machinists, however, were still interested. Two days after the Anyuan contingent's arrival, they set up an office for the Shui-koushan Workers' Club at the Kangjia Theater. A few workers from the General Management Section, the Mining Section, and the Transportation Section met with them and agreed to undertake the organization of the workers in their own sections.

At about the same time they set up a Provisional Executive Committee and selected Luo Tongxi as director, and Liu Dongsheng as vice-director. Liu Chengjun was made accountant; Xie Jinchun was made head of general affairs; and Huang Nanshan and Wang Rucai were made heads of the Documents Department. Then they set up a Provisional Congress of Representatives, selecting the representatives from the five sections roughly according to the organization of the mine itself: the Machine Section, the Transportation Section, the General Affairs Section, the Mining Section, and the Ore-dressing Section. Jiang Xianyun was made plenipotentiary representative (Li Rui states that he was made director of the Preparatory Committee), and the other three men from Anyuan were made "advisors" (Ming, 1958: 32).

One supposes that the designation "provisional" refers to the fact that the union was being organized quickly and not exactly from the bottom up. These officers were selected, not elected. At Anyuan, Li Lisan had used the night school to attract the workers and propagandize them. It was roughly nine months between the time that he began and the Anyuan strike occurred. At Shui-koushan, on the other hand, there existed a small core of activists, and the organization for a strike was rapidly woven around them. It would also appear that the organization of the recently reorganized Anyuan Club was duplicated in terms of the various departments set up under the Provisional Executive Committee.

The initial fear that the directors' speech had created, according to Ming Fei, dissipated rather rapidly. The local office, impressed by the Club's "civilized" behavior, did not interfere with the attempt at organization. In a matter of days more than 3,000 workers<sup>13</sup> put their names on the rolls. The Executive Committee then felt confident enough to send out two petitions, one to the xian magistrate at Changning and another to the local mining office, asking for official recognition of the club. They stated their reasons for organizing a club and requested the guidance of the officials.

At the same time, they handed out leaflets and pasted up posters

announcing the formal founding meeting of the club on November 27, 1922. This leaflet pointed out that intellectuals, students, merchants, and politicians all had their own associations. Only the workers did not, and now that was going to be remedied. They listed their purposes as: fostering a spirit of solidarity, cherishing virtue, mutual aid, and seeking their collective happiness (Ming, 1958: 32-33).

The founding meeting took place without incident, with about three-quarters of the workers attending. The director, Luo Tongxi, spoke, and Jiang Xianyun made a long speech. The three "advisors" from Anyuan all spoke, as did some of the local activists from Shuikoushan.

The picture which Ming Fei painted is one in which the organizers, that is the club officers, expended great effort to contain and direct the violence and anger of the workers. Once the club was founded, the workers were caught up in constant discussions on how to raise their living standards and improve their working conditions. However, because of the severity of their lives, "all of them tended toward violence, and Jiang Xianyun's plan called for dampening such flames" (Ming, 1958: 35). He and presumably the others on the Provisional Executive Committee were concerned about establishing the legitimacy of the club and feared that they and the club would be held responsible for any incidents.

The formation of the club, however, did revive a number of old issues. In March 1917 (about a month after the traditional New Year when bonuses were paid) there had been an altercation over the division of the bonuses. The workers claimed that the staff had always split the money so that the workers got seventy percent and the staff got thirty percent. In 1917, however, the staff decided to reverse these percentages in their own favor (Ming, 1958: 35; *JBN*, 1959: 464; Li Rui, 1957: 211). In May 1922 the workers destroyed the commissary because they thought they were being shortchanged on cooking oil and rice. And, they claimed, in August 1922 the staff had misappropriated their wages and used them for gambling capital. The workers had lost all of these confrontations, but now with the example of Anyuan before them, they were anxious to renew the battle (Ming, 1958: 34-35).

The local staff did, indeed, feel that the club was responsible for fanning the flames, and that the miners, always difficult to manage, were becoming more so because of the club. According to Ming Fei, the staff wired Manager Zhao Mingding in Changsha and

asked permission to execute Jiang Xianyun and the other agitators and to close down the club.

In an attempt to counter the accusations of the local mining staff, the club issued a statement on November 28:

... There are a few people around here (including workers, military people, and staff) who either because they are ill-educated or cannot think for themselves, feel that this sort of organization does not have a long-term plan and that it seeks only to increase wages and to foment opposition to the staff. Such rumors, such mistaken ideas, are ridiculous! ... We want always to create a feeling of solidarity, to foster virtue, mutual aid, and the general welfare. Our most revered staff members, please read our proclamations. ... Our only purpose is to form an organization which will provide us and our posterity with the means of obtaining mass education. Moreover, considering the present cost of living, which is rising daily, our living standard is under attack. We have to get organized in order to improve our lives and our working conditions. In this age of the freedom to assemble and organize there is no one who cannot organize in order to pursue the general happiness of the masses ... (Ming, 1958: 35-36).

The Provisional Executive Committee, in order to "dampen the flames," held a series of meetings designed to educate the workers so that they would understand "the stages that the struggle must go through" and to try to turn their volatile nature into "something more serious." The local staff, however, still did not revise its opinion of the club and, according to Ming Fei, sent spies to attend the meetings and to watch the club. They also sent the local mining police out to intimidate the workers, claiming that they were going to execute Jiang Xianyun and the others as an example to any other agitators, and thus maintain order at the mines (Ming, 1958: 36).

Ming Fei once again portrays the Executive Committee of the club as being unwillingly caught in the middle between volatile workers and an obstinate management. Jiang Xianyun and the other committee members did not want any incidents, and they did not want a strike. They were afraid they would be defeated. On the other hand, if they remained too quiet, they were afraid that the Mining Office would consider this a sign of weakness and thus attack them directly and militarily. Their solution to this dilemma was to put forward very minimal demands, demands that they hoped the Mining Office would grant without a strike (Ming, 1958: 36). On the morning of November 30, the Provisional Executive Committee sent their plenipotentiary representative, Jiang Xianyun, and the general representatives, in person, to the local mining office to see what the response would be.

They carried with them four demands:

- 1) The Club should be granted the right to represent the workers.
- 2) The Mining Office should contribute 1,000 yuan and a certain amount of land for the construction of Club facilities, plus a monthly subsidy of 200 yuan for purposes of education, mutual aid, and recreation.
- 3) Wages should be increased according to the following:
  - A. Those who are making 20 cents shall get an increase of 8 cents. Those who are making from 11 cents to 30 cents a day shall get an increase of 10 cents. Those who are making from 31 cents to 50 cents shall get an increase of 12 cents. Those who are making over one yuan are to get an increase of 5 cents. Those who are getting paid by the month shall calculate their wages by the day, and shall receive increases according to the above scale.
  - B. The machinists and contract workers who work outside the pits are to be transformed into labor paid by the day, and their wages are to be increased according to the scale in Part A.
  - C. The contract laborers who dig the tunnels and set off the explosives are to get an extra 4 yuan per foot, and the ones who carry the shuttles of raw ore are to get an extra 30 cash per shuttle.
  - D. Bucket carriers outside the mine shafts are to get an extra 20 cash per 1,000 catties carried.
  - E. Those who cob and process the ore are to get an increase of 50 percent of their daily wage.
  - F. The porters in the Transportation Department are to get an increase of one third of their original wage.
- 4) The bonus money shall be divided equally between the staff and the workers, and each man's share shall be based on his wage. Furthermore, the bonuses for 1918, 1919, 1920, and 1921 shall all be paid in 1922 (Ming, 1958: 37).

When the delegates walked into the mining office, they encountered Director Huang, the head of the General Affairs Section. He merely accepted the petition and agreed to forward it to Manager Zhao Mingding in Changsha (Ming, 1958: 36).

The following day, December 1, Director Zhao Xiaxian, head of the Mining Section, requested that Jiang Xianyun and Liu Dongsheng come to the mining office to negotiate. Jiang and Liu's account of this meeting was that at first the director was courteous, friendly, and respectful. However, a second person then entered, an account-

tant, Peng Yuenan. Peng had an exceedingly evil reputation, according to Ming Fei, and was brought in to threaten the club's delegates. Thus this attempt at fulfilling minimal demands without a strike failed (Ming, 1958: 38).

Although the miners were now insisting on a strike, the Provisional Executive Committee still wanted to wait, and it sent additional letters to the mining office. But the mining office continued to ignore them, and so the Provisional Executive Committee began secretly to prepare for a strike. The Strike Committee consisted of a Marshal's Team, a Communications Team, an Investigation Team, and an Assassination Team. (This is the only reference to assassination teams in the literature dealing with Hunan's labor unions, and probably reflects an anarchist presence at Shuikou-shan.) The marshals were to maintain order; the Communications Team was responsible for releasing information to all parties; the Investigation Team was assigned the task of investigating and dispelling all rumors; and the Assassination Team was to be used only if they had no other choice — "to assassinate opponents." Since none of the letters had been acknowledged by December 3, they sent one last message:

...Our Club has previously submitted three petitions, all of which have remained unanswered for reasons unknown to us. . . . If there is no reply by 4:00 p.m. tomorrow, December 4, we will be forced to resort to the "final entreaty" [a strike] (Ming, 1958: 38).

In response to this threat to carry out a strike, the various directors made offers to individual workers in their own respective sections on the afternoon of December 4. These unofficial offers did not include recognition of the club, however, and thus they were rejected (Ming, 1958: 38).

Because there had been no official response by December 4, a strike was declared for the next day. Thus began the twenty-three day strike, December 5 through 27, 1922, of the Shuikoushan Lead and Zinc Miners' Club. The public proclamation announced the following:

...Rice has become expensive; cotton has become expensive; if our wages do not go up, how are we supposed to keep body and soul together? How can we support our parents and wives and children? We have requested over and over again that our wages be raised, and that the bonuses be divided equally, but they have totally ignored us and are pushing us into our graves. We want to live! We must strike!...<sup>14</sup>

In a separate letter to the mining office, the club suggested that if the mining office wanted to negotiate, then it should make contact with the local gentry or the head of the hospital. "Otherwise the workers will sit and wait until they all fall dead" (Ming, 1958: 39).

Since the original four demands had been the result of an attempt to avoid a strike altogether and thus had been kept to a minimum, a new list of eighteen demands was drawn up and presented to the mining office the same day. They were as follows:

- 1) The Mining Office must recognize that the Club has the right to represent the workers, and moreover we demand that the district magistrate issue a protection order for the Club.
- 2) If in the future the Mining Office fires a worker, they must have a good reason and must secure the agreement of the Club. Furthermore, they absolutely shall not use the pretext of this strike in order to fire workers.
- 3) The Mining Office must contribute a monthly subsidy of 200 yuan to the Club, and in addition, they must contribute 1,000 yuan to our construction fund, and they must contribute a certain amount of public land for this construction. Before the Club facilities are constructed, the Mining Office must provide a public building for the Club's use.
- 4) The Mining Office must increase the wages of the workers, according to the following:
  - a) Those whose daily wage is 20 cents or less shall receive an increase of 8 cents. Those whose daily wage is between 21 and 30 cents shall receive an increase of 10 cents. Those whose wage is between 31 cents and 50 cents shall receive an increase of 12 cents. Those whose wage is between 51 cents and one yuan shall receive an increase of 14 cents. Those who receive more than one yuan shall receive an increase of 5 cents per day. Those whose wages are calculated by the month shall also now be calculated according to the day and raised according to the above scale.
  - b) The various sorts of contract laborers who work as skilled labor<sup>15</sup> outside the shafts shall now be paid by the day, and their wage increases shall be calculated according to the above.
  - c) The contract laborers who dig the tunnels and set off the explosives are to get an extra 4 yuan a foot, and the ones who carry the shuttles of raw ore are to get an extra 30 cash per shuttle.
  - d) Bucket carriers outside the mine shafts are to get an extra 60 cents per 100 buckets. Those who carry buckets inside the shafts are to get an extra 20 cash per 1,000 catties carried.

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- e) Those who cob and process the ore are to get an increase equal to 50 percent of their daily wage.
- f) The porters in the Transportation Department are to get an increase equal to one third of their original wage.
- 5) The wages of the workers must be paid on time, every month.
- 6) There must be an annual wage increase.
- 7) The workers must get one day per seven-day week off.<sup>16</sup> They must also get all legal holidays off and be paid as usual. Those who work on holidays must be paid time and one-half.
- 8) At the time of the New Year, according to the solar calendar, the Mining Office must pay a bonus equal to one month's wage and moreover must give a one week vacation.
- 9) With regard to workers who are killed on the job [literally, in service to the public], the Mining Office must pay an indemnity. For those workers whose annual wage was 150 yuan or less, they must pay 150 yuan. For those whose annual wage was more than 150 yuan, they must pay one year's wage. This should be paid in a lump sum.
- 10) Those who are injured on the job must be given suitable employment by the Mining Office. Otherwise the Mining Office should continue to pay them their wages by the month.
- 11) The workers shall receive paid leaves for funerals, weddings, and illness. For those who die while in the employ of the Mining Office, the Mining Office shall pay an indemnity of six months' wages, in a lump sum.
- 12) The workers demand one month's paid vacation every year. If a worker has had no leave for three years, he is entitled to three months' paid vacation.
- 13) The annual bonus shall be divided equally among the staff and the workers on the basis of their wages. The bonus for 1918, 1919, 1920, and 1921 must be paid immediately. The deadline is the twelfth month of the solar calendar.
- 14) All departments shall have eight hour shifts.
- 15) The Mining Office must pay wages as usual during the strike.
- 16) The staff and the foreman shall be forbidden to beat the workers from this day on.
- 17) In the future, when the Mining Office replaces or adds to the foremen at the various sites, they must promote a worker from that site according to the qualifications of the workers, and the staff must not select this person privately.

18) After the above demands have been recognized by the Mining Office, they must be carried out (Ming, 1958: 39-41; Shiyeh zazhi No. 62 (December 1922): 1).

Even after the strike was declared, the Provisional Executive Committee was still worried. On the one hand, according to Ming Fei, they were concerned that the marshals would not be able to maintain order. The miners were too volatile. On the other hand, they were afraid that the organization was too loose and that they would not be able to hold the ranks in line long enough to win the strike. From 4:00 in the afternoon on December 4 when the strike was secretly decided on, until 3:00 in the morning December 5 when the strike was implemented, the Provisional Executive Committee was in emergency meetings with the representatives from all of the sections. Each section representative was to assume complete responsibility for keeping the men in his section organized and "civilized."

Ordinarily there would have been a new shift coming on at 3:00 a.m. Instead, people were sent to each site to shut down the steam boilers, thus cutting off the power to the pumps which removed water from the shafts.<sup>17</sup> The fires in the trains' engines were extinguished. Only the shop that produced the electricity for the lighting system was left in operation, in order to prevent outsiders from coming in and looting at night. The marshals went out to paste up the slogans: "On Strike!" and "Salvation." Pasted on the walls were signs: "This strike is purely for the improvement of livelihood and working conditions, and is in no way related to the military government — please, everyone, lend your support." Others announced "No Work Until the Club Says to Work," "No Gambling Allowed," "No Disorderly Conduct Allowed," and "No One Shall Insult the Management." By dawn, every machine on the mountain was silent (Ming, 1958: 41).

The mining staff was not aware of the strike until the 8:00 whistle failed to go off. They were under the impression that the offers they had made the previous day, on the basis of the individual sections, had solved the problem. When they did emerge to be greeted by the club's slogans, one of the engineers in the Ore-Dressing Section named Liao became incensed and started tearing down the banners. He was soon surrounded by an angry mob of miners who were prepared to beat him to death. The strike marshals intervened and rescued Liao, and they criticized the miners for their lack of discipline. The anger subsided for the time being, but after the incident the staff was frightened and none dared interfere with the banners or posters (Ming, 1958: 42).



A high-level staff meeting was then held to determine how to deal with the strike. They began by sending telegrams to the provincial governor, Zhao Hengti, to the Provincial Mining Bureau, and to the manager of the Shuikoushan mine, Zhao Mingding, who was still in Changsha. The majority wanted to call in the army immediately, but they did not have the authority to do so. They would have to await the return of Manager Zhao, and he was not expected for at least ten days (Ming, 1958: 41; 1958, No. 2: 34).

In the manager's absence, they would have to work out other measures. Their primary concern was that the pumps had been shut off, and thus they were worried that the mines would become dangerous. On the morning of the sixth, the General Affairs Section commissioned two people, Lao Zhenzhi and Zeng Jiming, to go to the club and request that they turn the pumps back on. If the club were willing to do that, then they would negotiate the demands. The club's Provisional Executive Committee refused. They thought that the request was only a ploy and refused even to discuss the matter.

On the seventh the mining office tried once again to open negotiations. Lao Zhenzhi and Zeng Jiming returned to the club and asked the club representatives to go with them to the hospital for negotiations. Since the hospital manager had been suggested as a mediator in one of the petitions of the Provisional Executive Committee, they agreed to go. They were wine and dined for several hours, but nothing came of the meeting (Ming, 1958: 42).

By December 8 the situation had stalemated, and it remained so for the next ten days. The local staff was unwilling or unable to take any satisfactory measures until Manager Zhao Mingding returned, and the club was not yielding any ground either. On the eighth, the club solicited outside help in a number of letters and telegrams:

Fellow countrymen from the military, from the government, scholars and students, farmers, workers, and merchants! Please come to the aid of us 3,000 and more pitifully dying workers! Our strike is to maintain our livelihood and to improve our conditions, since even though we work all night and all day we cannot sustain our own lives, much less those of our parents, wives, and children — directly we shall be sitting at the side of our own graves. . . . The strike is now several days old and the mining authorities are still oblivious to our plight, and they use vile methods to push us into our graves. Fellow countrymen of all walks of life! How can we bear this for any length of time? Now we really have no food to eat. Our only choice is to die. . . . Save us quickly! Save our parents, wives, and children! . . . We are about to perish (Ming, 1958, No. 2: 31).

The appeal that went out on the eighth did not specify what kind of aid they wanted. On December 13, the ninth day of the strike, however, an appeal went out "to the Labor Secretariat and all unions," asking, "How can we quit in the middle?" This message asked for economic aid and "real aid," content unspecified. It also suggested that their supporters should send telegrams or special delivery letters signed by their organizations to the Hunan provincial government and to the Provincial Mining Bureau, demanding that the strike be settled (Ming, 1958 No. 2: 31-32).

The stalemate in Shuikoushan was broken five days later, on December 18, with the arrival of not one manager, but two. Manager Zhao Mingding, while still in Changsha, had, for fear of criticism, courteously offered his resignation. He did not expect it to be accepted, however, and when it was, he refused to relinquish the position. The man appointed to replace him, Liu Shitao, had in the meantime appointed a military official to act as caretaker (Ming, 1958 No. 2: 25).

Because Zhao Mingding's position in the Mining Industry Association was fairly solid, the association took a position adamantly opposed to Liu Shitao. The local staff at Shuikoushan was also favorably disposed toward Zhao and opposed to the appointment of Liu. Before Zhao and Liu's departure from Changsha, the situation had degenerated into a bitter argument between the two over who was responsible for the labor problems at Shuikoushan. In order to keep an eye on each other, they both set out for the mine.

In Hengyang they went to the Transportation Office to discuss how to deal with the strike. According to Ming Fei's informers, Liu Shitao, "for his own reasons," wanted to settle the strike peacefully. Zhao maintained a hard line, suggesting that the strike should be put down by force, and only if that failed should they negotiate the demands. Because Liu Shitao had not actually taken over the office, he was powerless to prevent Zhao from calling in the army, and Zhao thus sent an urgent telegram to the provincial governor, Zhao Hengti, requesting troops (Ming, 1958 No. 2: 25).<sup>18</sup>

On the same afternoon that the managers arrived in Shuikoushan, two other men deputed by Governor Zhao also arrived. They were Xiao Wen and Li Changyu. On the afternoon of the nineteenth, the rifle company of the Third Mixed Brigade, commanded by Xu Kunquan, joined them. The strike had reached a critical point. The Executive Committee sent out four separate petitions, one to Zhao Mingding, one to Liu Shitao, one to the provincial governor's rep-

representatives, Xiao and Li, and one to Commander Xu.

The petition addressed to Zhao Mingding was quite flattering, referring to the former manager as "a gentleman, so talented and generous." It went on to emphasize that the strike was a last resort and to detail all the letters that the club had sent before going on strike. It added,

Our humble organization's representatives believe that Shuikoushan is one of Hunan Province's vital parts. . . . Director Huang is in a dream world. Not only have he and the others ignored us, but they have tried to intimidate us. . . . Now that you have returned, it is hoped that you will do your utmost to preserve intact this vital part of Hunan Province (Ming, 1958, No. 2: 26-27).

The petition to the newly appointed manager, Liu Shitao, emphasized the intransigence of the local Mining Office staff:

The local office is still sleeping in the clouds — high above our cares here below. They see a dying man, but they walk on by. The countless workers have no choice but to keep holding out until the end — to sit and wait until they die, if necessary. Now your excellency has come to inspect, and it is the hope of several thousand workers — now like fish stranded in a dry creek bed — that our entreaty that the moral laws of humanity be upheld will soon be granted (Ming, 1958 No. 2: 27).

The petitions addressed to the men sent by the provincial governor and that addressed to Commander Xu emphasized the desperate economic circumstances of the miners and the alleged neglect of the Shuikoushan mining office. They asked them also to relieve their misery. "Do not let our families perish!" (Ming, 1958 No. 2: 28).

Manager Zhao, who had adopted a hard line with regard to the strike, began meeting with the local staff soon after he arrived. He is reputed to have suggested that the labor troubles could be put to rest if the instigators could be gotten rid of. It was his idea to lure Jiang Xianyun into the mining office. Accordingly, on the afternoon of the nineteenth, one of his "favorites," Zhao Yuanyou, was sent to the club to speak with Jiang Xianyun. Zhao told Jiang that in his opinion the demands were just ones and that Manager Zhao wanted to talk to Jiang alone.

Jiang and the other members of the Provisional Executive Committee were suspicious, however, and refused to let Jiang go alone. Liu Dongsheng had to go with him, and the workers would be

alerted if matters did not appear to go well. Jiang and Liu felt that they were in danger, but did not want to refuse the invitation, for fear that it would endanger the credibility of the club.

When Jiang and Liu arrived at the mining office reception hall, they found themselves surrounded by heavily armed police and soldiers. Manager Zhao Mingding greeted them with a question, "Who are you that you dare to incite the workers and shut down the pumps?" The two labor leaders then launched into an explanation of the strike, beginning with their invitation from the Shuikoushan mechanics, and ending with a discussion of how the club had been established, its goals and organization. According to Ming Fei's report, "The two managers thought it was all a lie. . ." (Ming, 1958: No. 2: 29).<sup>19</sup>

Subsequently, Xiao and Li, the members of the Provincial Mining Affairs Bureau who had been deputed by Governor Zhao, arrived, and then about a dozen mining office police. They tried to force Jiang and Liu to order the miners back to work, threatening them with execution if they refused.<sup>20</sup> They refused. As if by plan the mining office was then surrounded by several thousand workers. They screamed out at the mining office, "If you murder Jiang, there are still several thousand more of him! If you murder Liu, there are several thousand more of him, too. You should kill us all. The more the better!"

Zhao Mingding and Liu Shitao became concerned about the mob outside. They were also impressed by the coordination and organization that the demonstration revealed. Afraid for their lives, they agreed to turn the situation over to Commander Xu. Xu went out and spoke to the leaders of the demonstration and then released Jiang and Liu in order to break the encirclement (Ming, 1958 No. 2: 29). On the same day, the Provisional Executive Committee sent out a special delivery telegram addressed to all newspapers, civic associations, and unions in China. It described the seizure of Jiang and Liu and accused the mining police of tearing down the signs reading "Maintain Order" and of trying to force the workers to return to their jobs at gunpoint. The club requested aid once again (Ming, 1958 No. 2: 29).<sup>21</sup>

Two days later there was another incident which almost led to violence. The local staff had been relatively inactive since the first day of the strike, when the workers came close to beating the engineer at the Ore-Dressing Section, Liao. However, with the return of Zhao Mingding and the arrival of the rifle company, their

courage appears to have been restored. A staff meeting was held, and they elected Pan Zhengang as their plenipotentiary representative. Pan was the director of the Ore-Dressing Section, and after his election on the morning of December 21, he used the mining police in an attempt to force the workers in that section to start the machines.

The workers at that section were very young, "mere kids" according to Ming Fei. They were also the lowest paid (Pacific Development Corporation Report, 1920: 34). The Executive Committee suspected that the staff had picked out this group because they thought these young workers might be easier to control than the older men. However, in the ten days of relative calm before Zhao Mingding and Liu Shitao arrived, the club had attempted to inculcate the miners with the purposes and importance of the strike,<sup>22</sup> and these young boys refused to work, even at gunpoint.

The situation looked very tense, and the Provisional Executive Committee thus decided to deploy marshals to surround the ore-dressing platforms and to call up workers from other sections to come to their aid. The marshals seized Pan Zhengang's pistol, but they were under orders not to abuse him. Commander Xu was once again on the scene, and the pistol was turned over to him. The workers dispersed and Pan fled Shuikoushan. The local staff then retreated once again to their earlier position on the sidelines (Ming, 1958 No. 2: 29-30, 34).

According to the Communist account, Zhao Mingding then tried to bribe Jiang Xianyun, without success. Jiang called a meeting and announced, "If I ever take one penny as a bribe, I ask that you kill me as an example to anyone else who might think of doing the same." The mining office then put up a 200 yuan reward for the assassination of Jiang Xianyun, but the club protected him. Whenever any of the leaders went out, several dozen workers accompanied them (Ming, 1958 No. 2: 30).

As late as December 22, there had been no progress toward the settlement of the strike.<sup>23</sup> On that date, the club sent out yet another telegram. Having been accused by the mining office of destroying machinery, they sent out a denial, again addressed to all newspapers, civic associations, unions, and schools:

The mining office has telegraphed throughout the country saying that we have destroyed all the machines at Shuikoushan, and has made all sorts of charges against us. During the strike we have scrupulously maintained order and have

made special efforts to protect the machines, which happen to be the public property of Hunan. Not one machine has been damaged. . . . Please send telegrams to the provincial government and to the provincial mining office, and real aid — strikes in the factories and schools (Ming, 1958 No. 2: 33).

According to Ming Fei, the response was good. Telegrams came to the Hunan provincial government asking for a rapid settlement from such groups as unions and civic associations, and from academic personages as well. The Shuikoushan club received a considerable amount of financial aid from Anyuan and from Tangshan, a coal mining area in Hebei where the Communist and Hunanese Deng Zhongxia was at work. Several unions also set dates for sympathy strikes, but in the end they were not necessary (Ming, 1958 No. 2: 33).<sup>24</sup>

Precisely when the final negotiations began is not clear. It is unlikely that they were making any progress before December 23, or else the telegram of December 22 would not have been sent. Nevertheless, a settlement was reached on the evening of December 25 and was promulgated on the afternoon of December 26. It was signed by Li Changyu and Xiao Wen, on behalf of the Hunan Provincial Mining Bureau, and by Manager Zhao Mingding. Under their signatures were those of Jiang Xianyun, plenipotentiary representative of the Shuikoushan Lead and Zinc Miners' Club, Luo Tongxi, provisional director, and Liu Dongsheng, provisional vice-director (Ming, 1958 No. 2: 33). The following are the modified demands, as they were granted:

- 1) The Mining Office recognizes the right of the Shuikoushan Workers' Club to represent the workers, and moreover shall ask the district magistrate for a protection order.
- 2) The Mining Office, in the future, may not fire a worker without good reason, and it shall publish that reason. Moreover, it shall not use this strike as a pretext for firing workers.
- 3) The Mining Office shall turn over to the Club, for its use, the apprentice school, and moreover, it shall select land on which the Club can construct two schools, and shall contribute 1,000 yuan to the construction fund and pay a monthly subsidy of 200 yuan for the education fund of the Club.
- 4) The Mining Office will increase wages as follows:
  - a) Those whose daily wage was 20 cents or less shall receive an increase of 8 cents. Those whose wage was between 21 and 30 cents shall receive an increase of 9 cents. Those whose wage was between

31 and 50 cents shall receive an increase of 10 cents. Those whose wage was 50 cents to one yuan shall receive an increase of 12 cents. Those whose wage was one yuan or more shall receive an increase of 5 cents. Those whose wages are calculated by the month shall also now be calculated according to the day and raised according to the above scale.

b) With regard to the contract laborers in the sand casting shop, the price per pound shall be increased from 1.8 cents to 2 cents. The position of contractor shall be eliminated, and the workers themselves shall divide the accounts. The supervisor [jiangong] shall manage the shop directly. The remaining skilled labor who work outside the shafts and the contractors shall all be paid a daily wage, based on their original wage as a contract laborer, and this wage shall be increased as provided in Part 4)a). However, their numbers shall not be increased.

c) The contract laborers who dig the tunnels and set off the explosives shall have their wages calculated on the basis of their original pay, and they shall receive an increase of 3.90 yuan for each foot. Those who carry the shuttles of raw ore are to get an extra 28 cash per shuttle.

d) Those who carry buckets inside the shafts shall receive an increase of 20 cash per 1,000 catties. Those who carry buckets outside the shaft shall get an increase of 50 cents per 100 buckets. Moreover, the foreman's bonus [hongqian] is abolished.

e) Those who cob and process the ore are to get an increase equal to 50 percent of their daily wage.

f) The porters in the Transportation Section shall receive an increase equal to one third of their original wage.

5) The wages of the workers shall be paid every month, on time.

6) If a worker's performance is outstanding, the Mining Office shall take a wage increase into consideration every year.

7) Every New Year, according to the solar calendar, the Mining Office shall pay a bonus equal to one month's wage. (In 1922, and only in 1922, the bonus shall be one third of a month's wage.) The workers shall also receive a five-day holiday.

8) The workers shall have one day off in a seven-day week. All holidays shall be paid, and those who work on holidays shall receive double the usual wages.

9) If a worker is killed on the job, the Mining Office shall pay an indemnity. Those whose annual wage is 150 yuan or less shall receive 150 yuan. Those whose annual wage is more than 150 yuan shall receive an amount equal to one year's wage, to be paid in a lump sum upon the demand of the relatives.

10) Those workers who are injured or who become ill on the job shall be given suitable employment. Otherwise, they shall be given an allowance of 6 yuan [per month].

11) Workers who take leave for funerals, marriages, or illness shall be paid as usual. Leaves for weddings or funerals in this province shall be limited to one month. Those outside the province shall be limited to two months. Sick leave shall be limited to four months. Families of those who die of illness while in the employ of the Mining Office shall be given a lump sum equal to five month's wages.

12) A worker may request one month's vacation, with pay, each year. If a worker does not request a vacation for three years, he may ask for three months vacation at one time, with pay. If a worker has already had a leave for funerals, marriages, or sickness, he may not receive pay for the vacation.

13) Each department shall operate on eight-hour shifts.

14) Wages for the duration of the strike shall be paid as usual, on the basis of the previous month's wage. Those who worked during the strike shall receive extra pay. [This no doubt refers to those persons authorized by the club to perform tasks essential to safety and security.]

15) The staff, the foremen, and the workers shall all treat each other with love and respect. They shall not humiliate each other or disregard each other.

16) In the future, whenever the Mining Office wishes to replace or add to the foremen, they shall promote workers from the same site, according to their qualifications.

17) The annual bonuses shall be divided equally between the staff and the workers, according to their wages. The bonuses for 1918, 1919, and 1921 shall be divided so that the workers receive 65 percent, and the staff receives 35 percent.

18) After the above demands have been recognized by the two parties, they shall be carried out (Ming, 1958 No. 2: 36-37).

Although the strike was declared a "complete victory" ("Sheng-xian xia zhi Hunan," 1923: 76),<sup>25</sup> a comparison of the original demands and the demands as granted would reveal that they did not receive all that they had asked for. The wage increases which they had demanded in item 4) were marginally reduced. Nevertheless, if one considers the increases granted in item 4)a), the only section for which there are complete before and after statistics, the workers raises ranged from 8 to 12 cents a day. For relatively low paid workers (for example, those who had previously been



earning 20 cents per day), this would mean an increase of almost 200 percent. For higher paid workers, such as those earning one yuan a day or more, the increase would have been 5 percent or less. They did not receive the automatic annual wage increase which they had demanded. The resolution of the bonus issue, an old controversy, was a compromise. In the future, the bonus would be divided equally between the workers and staff, as the club had demanded. However, the workers were forced to accept only one-third of the usual bonus for the year 1922, although in return they won the right to more than half of the overdue bonuses for 1918, 1919, 1920, and 1921. These overdue bonuses were divided such that the workers would get 65 percent and the staff would get 35 percent (Ming, 1958: 34).<sup>26</sup>

Demands which might be categorized as "benefits" were generally granted but, as in the case of wage items, with marginal reductions. The seven-day holiday at the New Year became five days, and the indemnity to be paid to families of workers who died was reduced from six months' wages to five. In like manner, the demand concerning payments to injured workers was changed from a blanket statement that they would continue to receive their wages, to a limited statement that they would receive six yuan per month.<sup>27</sup>

Although one foreign expert on mining labor in China asserts that the Shuikoushan club abolished the contract labor system (Torgasheff, 1930: 926-927), the Chinese sources are not so explicit and do not support this statement in its entirety. Those workers who dug tunnels and set off explosives still were referred to in the settlement as contract laborers, and nothing on this score is said about several other categories of workers. On the other hand, the settlement does indicate that the contract labor system was abolished for skilled workers who worked aboveground. Both they and their contractors would be paid a daily wage by the mining office. (The contractors were probably retained as supervisors.) Sand casters, who were still to be paid on a piece-rate basis, were also removed from the system. Their contractors were simply eliminated. Yet another arrangement applied to bucket carriers inside the shafts. The last sentence of item 4)d) in the settlement states bluntly that in their case, the foreman's "red money" (which usually means bonus) was to be abolished. It is unlikely that the

use of the word "bonus" [hongqian] in this instance, refers to the annual bonuses which were divided proportionately between workers and staff.<sup>28</sup> It does not seem reasonable that one group of foremen would be singled out and excluded from this sort of bonus. More likely, it refers to the contractor's rake-off. If this latter interpretation of "bonus" is correct, by forbidding the rake-off the mining office was implicitly assuming responsibility for these workers' real wages as opposed to their official wages. Although under this system the contractors still received the workers' wages, they were obliged to pay them in full. No doubt, what gave this foreign expert the impression that the system no longer existed was the power of the union and its right to represent the workers. It is quite possible that the union's control over the workers had so diminished the traditional powers of the contractors that, in essence, the system was not the same.

The importance of this settlement is reflected in the following comment by this expert, Boris P. Torgasheff:

It seems, that it is the Hunan miners who are to be considered the pioneers of modern miners' unions in China. In December of 1921 [ sic ], about 12,000 [ sic ] miners of antimony [ sic ] and lead at Shuikoushan successfully won a general strike, and legalized, with the local authorities and mine owners, the existence of a general district labor union of miner's [ sic ]. The union was founded on very democratic principles, and obtained privileges not often met with even in European countries (Torgasheff, 1927: 923).

On December 26 the agreement was made public. A celebration was held the same afternoon, during which the miners carried slogans reading, "Labor Is Sacred," "Those Who Don't Work, Don't Eat," and simply, "We Won." The mining police and the rifle company attended, and after a number of speeches from the club officers, an officer from the mining police and Commander Xu of the rifle company also made speeches. After marching to Songbai and back, they proceeded to the mining office, and Zhao Mingding and the deputies Xiao and Li came out and made speeches, congratulating the club and lecturing them. The celebration broke up at midnight (Ming, 1958 No. 2: 34-35). Li Rui claims that 10,000 people participated in this march, including peasants from the surrounding area (Li Rui, 1957: 214).

The back-to-work Victory Proclamation was kept by one of the participants, and thus Li Rui quotes it in full:

We won! We won! Now we can breathe! Now we can live! We proclaim the back-to-work order. Before we were mules, but now it is "Long live the workers!" But this wage which we have just won should be considered as only the first victory — only one step in wiping out the pain and bitterness from our lives. We must continue the struggle for the second victory, and the third victory. We must reach the second step and the third. Workers! We must diligently maintain our organization, the club; we cannot bear not to win! In this strike, the help given us by the company commander, the platoon commanders and all of the soldiers of the independent rifle company of the Third Mixed Brigade and by the director of the hospital has been considerable, and we also acknowledge the aid given us by those from all walks of life. With all sincerity, we wish to express our thanks, again, our thanks.

We have won this strike! Now we can shout three times:

Long Live the Workers!

Long Live the Workers Club!

Long Live the Unity of the World Proletariat!

(Li Rui, 1957: 214-215).

This account of the strike reveals several rather curious attitudes which the author, Ming Fei, held toward the staff and the army. And since Ming Fei was a member of the Labor Secretariat and his report was published by the national office of the Labor Secretariat, these attitudes were probably not the attitudes of one individual, but rather reflected a more general attitude among at least a part of the membership of the organization.

The attitude toward the staff was ambiguous. On the one hand, Ming Fei portrays the staff as being adamantly opposed to any concessions. Because it was a government-owned mine, he reasoned, the staff did not stand to lose if the mine were damaged or production fell off (Ming, 1958 No. 2: 25). On the other hand, if the workers won, the staff would not gain anything. In fact, they would lose, since one of the workers' demands was a larger share of the bonus money.

Yet at the same time, Ming Fei does not attribute the staff's opposition to immutable class contradictions. On the contrary, especially with respect to Manager Zhao Mingding, there is a tendency to attribute staff opposition to a misunderstanding of the club's purposes. This is quite evident in the November 28 statement. "... We want always to create a feeling of solidarity, to foster virtue, mutual aid, and the general welfare," and thus those who opposed the formation of the union and thought that its purpose was to foment opposition to the staff were mistaken (Ming, 1958: 35-36). Again, during the description of the December 19 incident,

the negative attitudes of Manager Zhao Mingding and the top-level staff were attributed to disbelief. "The two managers thought it was all a lie..." (Ming, 1958 No. 2: 29). And there is the rather strange description of Manager Zhao and the deputies Xiao and Li addressing the assembled throng of victory celebrants on December 26 (Ming, 1958 No. 2: 34-35).

One possible explanation of the willingness of Manager Zhao and the others to address the victory rally is that Zhao was interested in bringing about at least a partial reconciliation between himself and the club's leaders, in the hope that he could enlist them on his side in the continuing dispute with the newly appointed manager, Liu Shitao.<sup>29</sup> Ming Fei claims that although the deputies Xiao and Li were ostensibly from the Provincial Mining Bureau in Changsha, and specially deputed there by Governor Zhao Hengti, these men were actually a part of Zhao Mingding's effort to maintain his position as manager. Ming Fei states that after Liu Shitao had left Shuikoushan in disgust, on December 22, Xiao and Li came every day to the club to try to enlist the workers in Zhao's effort to get rid of Liu Shitao. Perhaps Zhao's appearance at the victory celebration was a part of this attempt to persuade the club to make it impossible for Liu to assume his duties. Nevertheless, the club refused to get involved, and when Liu Shitao returned to Shuikoushan sometime in January 1923 to assume his duties as manager, the club took no notice (Ming, 1958 No. 2: 34).

Whether or not Manager Zhao Mingding's appearance at the celebration was a part of his effort to use the club in his dispute with Liu Shitao, there is still the question of why Ming Fei reported his appearance, and why he attributed the attitudes of the high-level officials to misunderstanding. The most obvious reason is that this report was meant for public distribution,<sup>30</sup> and although the Labor Secretariat was a public organization with a public purpose of organizing labor, the Communist Party and its purposes were secret. Although Marxist slogans such as "Workers of the World Unite" and quotes attributed to Marx such as "unity is power," dot the proclamations of the club, the main thrust of its argument relied almost exclusively on appeals to human justice and condemnations of abject poverty. Ming Fei in 1923 thus made no mention of the fact that the Provisional Executive Committee at Shuikoushan was under the direction of the Party branch in Hengyang (Li Rui, 1957: 213).

Considering the frequent condemnations of warlordism and mili-

tarism made by revolutionaries during this period, the attitude displayed toward the military is even more remarkable. Throughout the strike the local military is portrayed in the role of a buffer, and in the victory proclamation, the club thanked both the commanders and the men for their services. Some writers have suggested that statements of this kind which suggest fraternization between strikers and the military did not reflect reality. Such statements were inserted merely in an effort to drive a wedge between the military and the management (Liu and Zhu, 1958: 13).

Despite such disclaimers, however, there is reason to believe that such fraternization did take place. A contemporary non-Communist publication also mentions that the local military refused to put down the strike and that the commanders made it quite clear to the Shuikoushan club that they perceived their function to be strictly the maintenance of order and the protection of the plant. They assured the club that they were not going to interfere with the strike ("Local News," *Shiye zazhi*, No. 62 [December 1922]: 2). Ming Fei's account is also substantiated by Li Rui, who makes the point that the rifle company involved was permanently stationed near the mountain and thus susceptible to fraternization (Li Rui, 1957: 213-214).

Yet another theme in Ming Fei's report is the importance of law and order. During the strike the marshals had been assigned to every gate, every mine entrance, and around all of the important machinery to prevent any stealing or sabotage, and to keep strike breakers from coming in.<sup>31</sup> Ming Fei's report even maintains that Commander Xu complimented them on their discipline.

#### *POSTSTRIKE EFFORTS AT INCREASING PRODUCTION AND EFFICIENCY*

After the strike the club was reorganized, and for the first time the ten-man teams were set up. The structure of the club at Shuikoushan was almost identical to the one at Anyuan, including the representatives-of-10, the representatives-of-100, and general representatives. The Congress of Representatives included all of the above, while the Supreme Congress was made up of only the representatives-of-100 and the general representatives. They also selected a director, a vice-director, and an Executive Committee with nine departments: accounting, general affairs, documents, education, mutual aid, external affairs, marshals, lectures, and

recreation. The Supreme Congress then adopted a Provisional General Constitution (Ming, 1958 No. 2: 38).<sup>32</sup>

The reorganized Shuikoushan club then embarked on a program designed to increase production and efficiency, once again, very much like Anyuan. Ming Fei, reflecting the club's sensitivity to charges that it was a "destructive" organization, describes a three-part program aimed at improving the miners' work attitudes, their morality, and taming their "arrogance" (Ming, 1958 No. 2: 50).

In his report, Ming Fei admits that poor work attitudes prevailed at the mine, although he does attribute them to the laxity of the management. The workers did not go on or off the shifts at the proper times, and they were slow on the job (Ming, 1958 No. 2: 50-51). This sort of work attitude was also reported by the German manager at Anyuan and was ascribed to Chinese mining labor in general by Boris P. Torgasheff.

... It is often affirmed that the Chinese miners, as a rule, work at great leisure, continuously stopping for rest, a chat or smoke. . . . Only the miners in great debt to the contractor . . . are sometimes seen strenuously working, often, even two shifts in succession, but this is an exception, and it always happens before the Chinese New Year (Torgasheff, 1930: 914).

At Shuikoushan, as at Anyuan, the general attitude was that increasing production was in the workers' interest. "If the workers do not work hard, then production will fall off. If production falls, then the workers' interests will be directly affected" (Ming, 1958 No. 2: 50-51). Ming Fei reports that immediately after the strike the workers were very enthusiastic, and production in every department was high. This enthusiasm wore off, however, and production fell. The club then called a series of meetings to discuss the problem, and the representatives from each section then assumed the responsibility for increasing production in their own departments. Reports were made, and leaflets on the topic were handed out, encouraging the workers and admonishing them. They had some success. Ming Fei claimed that these efforts to increase productivity were remarkably successful (Ming, 1958 No. 2: 50-51).

The club had proclaimed that one of its goals was "to foster morality," and the Executive Committee appears to have taken that plank rather seriously. All of the mines in China at the time were dens of iniquity — gambling, prostitution, and secret societies abounded, as did "pride, luxury, profligacy, and idleness." The

mining office had tried several times to prohibit gambling, without success. A few years before, the area had been occupied by Guangxi troops, who had also tried to stop the gambling. They succeeded only in infuriating the miners. Several soldiers were injured, and some were murdered (Ming, 1958 No. 2: 51).

In spite of all previous failures in this respect, Ming Fei declared the efforts of the Shuikoushan club a complete success. "Shuikoushan, all of a sudden, became a pure society." The club, according to his report, used a two-sided approach with regard to gambling. One part was a mass education campaign stressing that gambling was not only illegal, it was injurious to the workers. It was yet another means of exploitation, draining the workers of their wages. On the other hand, the club dealt severely with those who broke the regulation. Most people were even happy to see it go, he said. Furthermore, the staff, many of whom were also devotees of the gambling halls, gave it up. "Who wanted to lag behind the workers' self-rule?" The local opium dealers and prostitutes saw what was happening and "became acquainted with the prestige and influence of the club," and left, even before their livelihoods were banned (Ming, 1958 No. 2: 51).

Even if one is dubious about the success of this antivice campaign, the very claims that Ming Fei makes are interesting in and of themselves. That the post-1949 puritanism for which the People's Republic is now so well known should appear as early as 1923, and in the context of increasing industrial production, is, perhaps, yet another confirmation of Weber's nineteenth century observation concerning the link between the puritan work ethic and the development of modern economies. Furthermore, one can already observe the technique of mass education campaigns and the emphasis on example, or emulation, in shaping conduct. It is particularly noteworthy that Ming Fei singles out the staff as being subject to such moral persuasion.

The matter of "arrogance" was a new problem. Before the strike, the workers had suffered countless indignities. They had to address the staff members, whether they were low or high ranking, as "master" or "sir." The staff showed no respect at all for the workers. After the strike, the workers "felt like they had moved from the bottomless pit to the mountaintops," and would defer to no man. "They thought that the club was the supreme power in Shuikoushan, and obligated to defend them whatever they did." Such attitudes led to many incidents, and the staff for a long

time did not dare go onto the work sites. The Executive Committee thought that such attitudes were an obstacle to future progress and interfered with the purposes of the club. Again there were many meetings. The workers were told that such "superficial pride would bring criticism from outside and, moreover, the true meaning of class struggle does not lie in outward manifestation." The Executive Committee was reasonably satisfied with the results. "Although there were still unresolvable contradictions between workers and staff, superficially they gradually began to treat each other decently" (Ming, 1958 No. 2: 51).

The Shuikoushan Workers' Club then proceeded to start programs in education, mutual aid, and recreation. One of the strike demands had been that the mining office contribute 1,000 yuan to the building fund and provide a monthly subsidy of 200 yuan for education. These demands were granted, and after the strike, plans were made for the construction of a school building. Two foreign companies, both purchasers of Shuikoushan ore, and a Chinese company gave the club a total of 12,000 yuan. The mining office contributed 2,000 yuan according to the strike settlement, plus an additional 1,000 yuan. Other small contributions, including those of the miners themselves, brought the total to something around 15,000 yuan. When the report was written in September 1923, construction on the new school building had just begun, but classes had started on April 9, 1923, with about 120 students in a side room of the old office. These classes were financed by the 200 yuan per month subsidy paid by the mining office and were held six days a week, from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. In the future, they hoped to get funds from Changning xian to finance the school (Ming, 1958 No. 2: 52).<sup>33</sup> Mao Zedong, in his capacity as head of the Hunan Labor Secretariat, sent them a principal for the school and several teachers, including his younger brother Mao Zetan, who had just graduated from the Extension School at Self-Education University (Li Rui, 1957: 215).<sup>34</sup>

Mutual aid, a traditional function of the regional associations among the workers, was also provided by the club. Ming Fei comments that "... in some ways mutual aid is more important than education, since it relates to living and dying." The Mutual Aid Department was responsible for the consumers' cooperative, job introductions, labor insurance, and assistance in time of illness or unemployment. The consumers' cooperative officially opened in the early summer of 1923.



The idea of recreation as a function of a workers' organization was a fairly new one, and thus the 1923 report on Shuikoushan added a few sentences in explanation:

At least superficially, recreation has never been considered a particularly important item, especially in the estimation of Chinese society. Negatively, it serves to correct all unhealthy activities and [positively] to mold character, promote virtue, and develop human skills. The human being is not clumsy; he is not a wooden slab, but a living creature. If a man does not have proper pastimes, then he will engage in improper amusements. Thus, in order to improve society and enrich human life, it is necessary to advocate recreation.

The Recreation Department at Shuikoushan in 1923 was barely off the ground, but it had program committees for Chinese and Western music, sports, and drama (Ming, 1958 No. 2: 58).

The Shuikoushan Workers' Club became, at least for the miners, a sort of unofficial local administration. In addition to running the school, the cooperative store, and the recreation program, it became the arbitration court. As at Anyuan, the club was swamped by the disputes brought before it and was further involved in the construction of the new school building. Ming Fei claims that the mining office was incapable of enforcing any regulation or policy without the agreement of the club (Ming, 1958 No. 2: 63-64). He even went so far as to say that the club was "like a Soviet" and was based on the theory of democratic centralism. "In theory it was a brand new and beautiful system, but in reality, one shouldn't think that it was without problems" (Ming, 1958 No. 2: 38). Nevertheless, the Executive Committee was pleased with their progress in the fall of 1923 and reported to Ming Fei that they were getting less and less interference from outside. "People are now familiar with the club's aims and the importance of Shuikoushan" (Ming, 1958 No. 2: 63-64).

Perhaps one example of their successful public relations effort is the following letter, written by the Reverend C. H. Derr in Hengzhou:

During the past few months, work at the Sweikeo Shan [ sic] has been carried on with unusual vigor. Three thousand men were employed. The Workmen's Glee Club celebrated May Day with enthusiasm. Foreign firms that buy ore from this mine have made "contributions" to the Club which were used to purchase a building, and to open day and evening schools. The red flag floats proudly from the top of the building. . . . (U.S. Government Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State [RG 84], Changsha, 1923, 800.

Letter, dated May 14, 1923, addressed to "The Editor, Central China Post, Hankow." A copy of the letter was forwarded to the Consul General in Changsha, and included in his files).

### *THE SONGBAI UNIONS*

The Shuikoushan area was, in a way, a semimodern island surrounded by a traditional sea, even more so than Anyuan. The coal was moved out of Anyuan by a modern railroad, and the railroad workers were a part of the Anyuan club. The situation in Shuikoushan's backyard, however, was quite different. The ore went by a narrow-gauge railroad down to Songbai, about three or four miles away. At Songbai, in addition to those who were on the regular payroll of the Shuikoushan mines, there were hundreds of boat families and coolies involved in the transport of the ores by river to Hengyang or Changsha. These people were not regular employees. "When the boat people were not carrying ore, then they were just the same as all the other boat people on the river."

When the miners at Shuikoushan had formed their union and gone on strike, they had, as a matter of course, included the regular employees of the mine who worked in the Transportation Section at Songbai. They made no attempt to enlist the boat people and coolies because the nature of their employment and their relationship to the mining office was quite different. "It was inconvenient." In addition, the wages of the boat people were far below those of the miners, and to have raised issues on their behalf would have required a separate and distinct effort (Ming, 1958 No. 2: 59-60).

After the December 26, 1922, victory at the Shuikoushan mine, and the march to Songbai and back, the boat people and coolies were impressed with the results of organization and saw its usefulness. They sent representatives "several times" to the Executive Committee of the Shuikoushan club asking if they could join.

However, the club felt that because of the unsteady nature of their work, their circumstances were different, and that it would present all sorts of difficulties if they joined. The strike was just over, there was a lot of internal work waiting to be done, and matters were very pressing. They could not get involved in some other place. Therefore, they could not permit them to join at that time (Ming, 1958 No. 2: 59-60).

Nevertheless, within a month, the club had a change of heart.

"They were all part of the proletariat, and the goal of 'Workers of the World, Unite' meant that they must help organize other places." In January 1923 they sent Li Chengyu to go back and forth to Songbai to help the boat people organize a union. The union was called the Songbai Ore-Boat Union, and it immediately demanded an increase in freight charges from the various businesses that hired the boats. A rate increase was given them, raising the charge per load from 160 to 180 cash (Ming, 1958 No. 2: 61).<sup>35</sup>

The men who loaded the boats also organized with the help of the vice-director from Shuikoushan, Liu Dongsheng. In April 1923 carrying coolies succeeded in increasing their rates from 12 cash to 20 cash per load. They then formed a union, the Songbai Transport Workers' Union, with a limitation of 800 on its membership (Ming, 1958 No. 2: 59).

Both the Songbai unions were semiautonomous, but associated with the Shuikoushan club. Their constitutions specified that they be organized into 10-man teams (10-boat teams in the case of the boat people), and they had representatives-of-100 and general representatives as well. Each union had one general representative who sat in the Supreme Congress at Shuikoushan and had full rights in that congress. Ming Fei commented that this arrangement solved the problem of the differences and also served the Songbai unions by providing them with experience and direction (Ming, 1958 No. 2: 62).

#### *THE YUEBEI WORKERS AND PEASANTS' UNION*

Shuikoushan's setting also contributed to another unusual feature of this union. In 1923 the club spawned the first peasants' union in Hunan. Many of the miners came from peasant homes in nearby Hengshan xian, and in the early part of 1923 the Party sent Liu Dongsheng and Xie Huaide back to their homes, also in Hengshan xian in the district of Baiguo, to start a peasant union.<sup>36</sup> Under the direction of Liu and Xie, the peasants formed the Yuebei Workers and Peasants' Union. (The "Workers" was added to indicate that they had close organizational ties with the club at Shuikoushan.) Over 10,000 peasants were organized into 10-household units. Each of these units then selected a representative-of-10, and 10 of the latter then selected a general representative. Their economic goals centered around an attempt to control the rice market and a further effort to prevent the landlords from selling

rice, cotton, and other products for export outside the province. They were also interested in education and the rights of women (Li Rui, 1957: 126; *JBN*, 1959: 484-486),<sup>37</sup> which may have been the reason that Mao Zedong sent both his wife and sister to work with the Yuebei union (Han, 1972: 100).

### *DEFEAT AND LEGACY*

In December 1923 the troops of Zhao Hengti destroyed the Shuikoushan Workers' Club. Li Rui claims that it was because the club was having an adverse effect on the incomes of the mining office personnel, and Zhao Hengti in particular (Li Rui, 1957: 216). However, there is no reason to attribute such purely economic motives to Zhao. The mine had not always been lucrative, and according to Ming Fei, production increased after the strike. No doubt the political problems that such unions presented were of more concern to the provincial governor Zhao. This particular club had not even confined itself to the miners, but was spreading its influence among the local boat people and coolies, and even among the peasants. Indeed, the village of Baiguo, one of the peasant organizing sites, happened to be the home of Zhao Hengti (Li Rui, 1957: 216).

Furthermore, the Shuikoushan mine was state-owned, and this might have been an important factor in Zhao's decision to intervene. In this regard, it is interesting to note that Mao Zedong, when he was trying to persuade the Changsha construction workers to hold out in the face of governmental opposition, pointed out that "Zhao Hengti is isolated, and furthermore this strike is not so directly related to his personal interests as the other, so he will probably not be so adamant" (Li Rui, 1958: 197). The "other" strike that Mao had in mind was not the Shuikoushan strike but the January 1922 strike in the Changsha textile mill, a strike that ended with Zhao's execution of two students who had been involved in organizing it. But the textile mill had also been a state-owned enterprise, and it would seem that Mao was suggesting that this fact was related to Zhao's increased concern.

Probably the main reason that the Shuikoushan club met an early defeat was that it was caught up in a war between Tan Yankai and Zhao Hengti, a war which took place in southern Hunan in the fall of 1923. When in September 1923 Tan's armies invaded Hunan, the Yuebei Workers and Peasants' Union issued the following proclamation:

Our dear peasant friends: We constitute one of the world's four groups — the scholars, the peasants, the artisans, and the merchants. Yet when it comes to people's rights, aside from crying out about bitterness and injustice and laboring day and night in filthy stagnated water, we have no rights! We cannot go to school — you have to have money to do that. If we try to rent a decent house, the landlord thinks we shall try to steal him blind! If we want food to eat between the harvests, even if you put up your money, there is no grain left. If you need clothes, the foreigners have sent the price of cotton spiraling and they have bought up the supply. We are forced to go naked, unable to spin and weave our own cloth. Other people, such as those who have become rich by obtaining official position, used their prestige and power to buy up the people's land. Those officials who are trying to get rich collect the land tax long before it is due. The foreigners secretly instigate fights among the warlords. Everywhere they hire soldiers. Today we are impressed for military coolie service; tomorrow we are impressed as runners. On the road we are pounded on this way and that. The foreigners send their foreign wares to China, and now the products of our former handicrafts are worthless everywhere! All these many kinds of oppression are the result of our having forgotten the weapon of unity. For this reason we have not resisted the enemy. But now we know. If we want to escape the bitterness of our own lives, everyone must unite! (JBN, 1959: 485).

Whether or not the Shuikoushan Lead and Zinc Miners' Club also took advantage of the invasion to further their own cause, it became quite clear to Zhao Hengti that these organizations were dangerous. In December 1923 he eliminated the threat. Only a matter of months<sup>38</sup> after the Executive Committee had told Ming Fei, "People are now familiar with the club's aims and the importance of Shuikoushan," the club was occupied. Hostilities broke out between the soldiers and the miners. One person was killed and several injured. The whole body of workers went out on strike, and the head of the Mechanics' Union, Bin Bucheng, who had been specially deputed by Zhao Hengti, shut down the club and dismissed over 1,000 miners.<sup>39</sup> Jiang Xianyun and some of the club leaders were forced to leave Shuikoushan, and the Party was forced underground (Li Rui, 1957: 126).

Although the club was destroyed, it did leave behind a legacy. Several of the workers' leaders, including Liu Dongsheng, joined the Communist Party and continued their work elsewhere (Li Rui, 1957: 215). In 1926 the Party revived the club, and when the troops of the Northern Expedition entered Hunan in the autumn of that year, Jiang Xianyun (by then an officer in the Northern Expeditionary Army) and Liu Dongsheng returned to Shuikoushan for a time. Li Rui claims that after the debacle in May 1927, when the Communist-Nationalist alliance broke down, over

10,000 workers and peasants around Shuikoushan seized the rifles of the mining police, and then 3,000 of them went down the mountain to attack unsuccessfully the county seat, Changning. In early 1928, 200 men again seized the rifles of the mining police and started a guerrilla war. These troops participated in the Xiangnan Uprising and became the core of the Independent Regiment of the Communist Fourth Army (Li Rui, 1957: 215-216).<sup>40</sup>

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>See also a report compiled in 1920 by an American company, the Pacific Development Corporation. This report was filed with the American Consulate in Changsha in 1922. U.S. Government Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State (RG 84) Changsha, 1922, No. 863. Hereinafter referred to as Pacific Development Corporation, 1922.

<sup>2</sup>A much more modern use for lead, and thus irrelevant here, is nuclear shielding.

<sup>3</sup>This is the standard Mandarin pronunciation of the characters 松柏 (pines and cypress). The name of the town appears in the literature as Sumpei, Sungpo, Sungpeh, or Sungpai.

<sup>4</sup>This phenomenon is discussed more fully both by Isaacs (1961: 21-22) and by Chesneaux (1968: 157).

<sup>5</sup>See above, p. 75, in the chapter on the Anyuan strike.

<sup>6</sup>For the reference to Mitsui, see Document #863; for the reference to a British company, see #800, a letter from C. D. Meinhardt to the secretary of state, dated February 7, 1923. U.S. Records of Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State (RG 84), Changsha, 1923 (C-8).

<sup>7</sup>Boris P. Torgasheff's 128-page article, "Mining Labor in China," was serialized in the *Chinese Economic Journal*, VI (1930), 392-417, 510-541, 652-676, and VII (1930), 770-795, 909-927.

<sup>8</sup>This figure of 3,000 workers is given by Li Rui, 1957: 211, and by a May 14, 1923, letter to the editor of the *Central China Post* in Hankou, from the Rev. C. H. Derr of Hengzhou. Rev. Derr also sent a copy of his letter to the Changsha Consulate. See Records of Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State (RG 84), Changsha, 1923, No. 800.

<sup>9</sup>Ming Fei might be a pseudonym. It has been impossible to identify him.

<sup>10</sup>The Hong Kong strike was not organized by the Communist Party.

<sup>11</sup>According to the table on p. 169 (above), fitters (machinists) earned from 30 cents to \$1.50 (Chinese *yuan*) a day. In the table on p. 168 (above), they are listed under "miscellaneous" operating expenses.

<sup>12</sup>Ming Fei (1958: 32) gives the more precise date, November 22, 1922, as the date of the Anyuan club members' arrival.

<sup>13</sup>All references to the number of workers at Shuikoushan, whether to the number of union members, total number of workers, or number of beneficiaries of the strike, give the number as "more than 3,000." For this reason, one can assume that this figure applies to the total number of workers, and that Ming Fei is making the unlikely suggestion that all of the workers were enrolled between November 22 and November 27.

<sup>14</sup>Ming Fei's original report included a series of documents, such as this proclamation. The HNLSZL reprinted Ming Fei's report in full, and thus all the documents are included. HNLSZL, 1958 No. 1: 39.

<sup>15</sup>Literally, the text says gongcheng, variously translated as engineer, machinist, or mechanic. However, since the demands as granted refer to sand-casters, it is apparent that gongcheng is being used here in a loose sense.

<sup>16</sup>In traditional China, months were divided into three ten-day "weeks" (xun). Thus the workers felt it necessary to indicate a "short week."

<sup>17</sup>Shutting off these pumps was a rather dangerous act which could have led to flooding in the shafts. At Anyuan this was threatened but never actually carried out.

<sup>18</sup>This dispute between Zhao and Liu is discussed at some length in "Local News," Shiye zazhi, No. 62 (December 1922): 2-6. Liu maintained that the workers' right to organize a union was guaranteed by the provincial constitution. Zhao was concerned that a union would erode the authority of the mining staff and thus favored military suppression.

<sup>19</sup>It is interesting to note that Ming Fei, in his public report, attributes the problem to a lack of understanding, or disbelief, rather than to immutable class contradictions.

<sup>20</sup>There is some verification from a non-Communist source for this intimidation. Carl D. Meinhardt, vice-consul in Changsha, wrote to J. Calvin Huston in a letter concerning the Shuikoushan strike (dated March 20, 1923), "The threats of military interference and official delegations from Changsha failed to weaken the miners in their demands" (U.S. Government Records of Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State [RG 84], Changsha, 1923, 850.4).

<sup>21</sup>The above encounter and the telegram are verified by a description in "Local News," Shiye zazhi, No. 62 (December 1922): 2.

<sup>22</sup>This would seem to be an admission that the mobilization work and indoctrination concerning the aims of the strike were carried out, at least in part, after the strike began.

<sup>23</sup>In fact, the dispute between the former manager Zhao and the new manager Liu had prevented any settlement. On December 22 Liu threw up his hands in disgust and returned to Hengyang. Zhao Hengti had to order him back to the mine. See "Local News," Shiye zazhi, No. 62 (December 1922): 3-7.

<sup>24</sup>Li Rui (1957: 214) indicates that the club received congratulatory telegrams after the strike from organizations in Changsha, Anyuan, Tangshan, Shanghai, Hankou (the Hanyeping workers), and from the Third Normal School in Hengyang. (Jiang Xianyan was a graduate of the Third Normal School.)

<sup>25</sup>Meinhardt, the American vice consul in charge in Changsha, singled this strike out as "entirely successful." See U.S. Government, Records of Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State, (RG 84), Changsha, 1923, 850.4.

<sup>26</sup>Before 1917 the workers had received 70 percent of this bonus. In that year, however, the percentages for the workers and the staff were reversed. Thus even though the workers were to receive 65 percent of the overdue bonuses, they did not regain the pre-1917 level.

<sup>27</sup>If, however, a worker had been making less than 6 yuan a month prior to the injury, this restatement would increase his benefits.

<sup>28</sup>The annual New Year's bonus is usually referred to as hongjiang (Ming, 1958: 34).

<sup>29</sup>Although this may sound a little unlikely, a similar case in Changsha was described by Vice Consul in Charge Meinhardt in a letter dated March 30, 1923: "In February [1923], an attempt was made by the former Director of the Changsha Mint to organize a labor union among the workers in the Mint and to have them strike for the purpose of displacing the Director, but the workers were unwilling to be used as pawns in this manner" (U.S. Government Records of Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State [RG 84], Changsha, 1923, 850.4).

<sup>30</sup>There are a number of references to "misinformation" concerning the strike's legality, and thus the deputation of Ming Fei to Shuikoushan. One such reference can be found in Ming, 1958: 28.

<sup>31</sup>In his article on mining labor, Boris Torgasheff makes the very interesting observation that the contract labor system made it very difficult for the companies to hire new workers, even when there were masses of unemployed. "...Each group of unemployed is connected with this or that contractor and it is not always as easy as it may seem to get the necessary amount of labor..." This may be the reason that strike breakers did not play a major role in any of the strikes under consideration (see Torgasheff, 1930: 538).

<sup>32</sup>The text of the constitution is given (Ming, 1958: 39-42), and the committee structure is described (Ming, 1958: 43-50).

<sup>33</sup>These companies are identified as purchasers in a letter dated May 14, 1923, written by the Reverend C. H. Derr to the editor of the Central China Post. Derr also sent a copy to the American Consulate in Changsha (U.S. Government, Records of Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State [RG 84], Changsha, 1923 [C-8], 800).

<sup>34</sup>Mao Zetan was killed in Fujian in 1935 where he was secretary of the Twelfth Army Base Area in western Fujian and secretary of the Politburo of the Central Revolutionary Base Area.

<sup>35</sup>The constitution of this union is reprinted in full in Ming, 1958 No. 2: 59-61.

<sup>36</sup>JBN (1959: 484) indicates that there was also an attempt to organize peasants in the vicinity of Anyuan.

<sup>37</sup>The figure of 10,000 comes from JBN (1959: 484). Li Rui (1957: 126) gives a figure of 100,000.

<sup>38</sup>Ming Fei wrote his report in September 1923, and the club was occupied in December 1923.

<sup>39</sup>Bin Bucheng was described in July 1923 as the leader of the Machinists' Union, an affiliate of the Chinese Union. See "Shengxian xia zhi Hunan," 1923: 75-76.

<sup>40</sup>Liu Dongsheng was executed at Qiyang, Hunan, in 1928. He was secretary of the local Party branch at the time of his death.



## Conclusion

The preceding account of the formation of four unions in the Hunan Labor Secretariat demonstrates the fallacy of assuming that because the pre-1927 revolution was urban and principally concerned with labor unions it was therefore orthodox. Mao Zedong, for example, led former guild members out on strike under a slogan of free enterprise, and Liu Shaoqi devoted himself to increasing production in the mines. That is certainly not what classical Marxism would lead one to expect. In fact, a study of the Hunanese movement suggests that the Chinese revolution has never fit the orthodox pattern, not even in 1922 during the national strike wave that was characterized by economic demands and unionization campaigns that were largely unrelated to nationalist causes. In several significant ways, many of China's cities were no more modern than the countryside. Many urban institutions were equally as old, and just as traditional, as the landlord-tenant system in the rural areas. Thus the Chinese revolution, even during its early urban phase, often operated within an unorthodox environment and could not escape being shaped by it.

According to orthodox theory, or the revolutionary scenario that Marx predicted for Europe's future, there were no ideological grounds for predicting a Communist-led labor movement in a largely preindustrial China. And yet, there was a significant movement, and in Hunan it was led by Communists. This paradox suggests that the factors which contributed to the initial success of the movement were not solely or primarily those theoretically revolutionary conditions created by a mature industrial environment. And, in fact, a close examination of the Hunanese movement does reveal some factors which were unrelated to the level of industrialization and some factors which were related not to a mature industrial setting but to an environment in which industriali-

zation was just beginning to have an impact — and an impact at times still very indirect.

#### *FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE LABOR MOVEMENT*

Obviously, Chinese workers were poor and their already low standard of living was deteriorating owing to a ceaseless inflation, regardless of the kind of work that they did. Inflation inspired unrest and led to demands for higher wages and hard currency that the employers ultimately were unable or unwilling to meet. Ever since 1918 workers had been striking, if not winning (JBN, 1959: 383-384). In all four of the strikes considered here, the desire for higher wages and bonuses was of paramount importance in provoking the strikes and providing issues around which unions could be organized. And each economic victory increased the Party's credibility and made it easier for its members to organize the next. The Communists demonstrated their ability to deliver what the workers wanted.

Another characteristic that stands out is that in Hunan all the organizing was carried out against Chinese employers, and all the strikes were called against Chinese enterprises, without exception. Hunan's proud antiforeign elite, both its conservative and reformist factions, had succeeded in limiting the foreign impact. There were no foreign factories in Hunan. Although the organizers were thus deprived of the possibility of accusing any employers of imperialist exploitation, this fact also meant that the employers were less experienced at dealing with modern unions and usually did not have the financial resources or profit margins that enabled some foreign companies to wait out strikes. One might also hypothesize that Chinese employers were more subject to local popular opinion than were foreigners. Thus in many ways, their employers, as opponents, were relatively weak.

Another factor of great importance that accounts for both the speed of the movement and its success is that the workers were, in fact, already organized. True, their organizations, the contract labor gangs at the mines and the guilds in the cities, were not militant class-delineated institutions, but they did exist, and they provided a framework for infiltration as well as a strong awareness of group identity and the value of concerted action. Also, owing to the near monopoly on recruitment that the guilds and contractors

enjoyed — that is, the corporate nature of the labor force — it was difficult for employers to recruit new workers, or strike-breakers, even for unskilled jobs (Torgasheff, 1930: 538-539). Unlike Europe, where the feudal ties had been weakened before the onset of Marxist-inspired labor organizing, or America, where there had never been any feudal ties, the traditional bonds among workers were still strong in China. Labor organizers did not have to create unity from scratch; they mainly had to discredit the contemporary leadership of traditional organizations and reincorporate the workers into modern unions. This explains the speed with which some unions organized and belies the notion that a speedy formation implied nothing more than a "paper" union.

The real key to an understanding of what produced the successful labor movement in Hunan is an analysis of which sector the initial and most successful energy bursts came from. Neither the Western presence in China nor the impact of locally sponsored modernization was felt equally or in the same way by all sectors, and the response to these new conditions was not uniform. In Hunan, surprisingly, the initial energy did not come from the most modern workers, such as those at the electric generating plant. Nor did it come from those craftsmen left behind by modernization, such as the wood-block carvers, or those in which the old customs and techniques had survived the transition intact, such as lithographers; nor was it initially successful among those sectors hardest hit by the postwar slump, such as the antimony and glass industries (JBN, 1959: 386-389). On the contrary, the energy seems to have come from those traditional crafts which were modernizing their technology (printers and miners) or being drawn into the world market (miners), or those stimulated by increased and changing economic and commercial activity, such as construction workers. The most successful unions were in those industries whose leaders were not only coping but creatively responding to the new conditions.

Why the most serious unrest would come from the most responsive sectors of the traditional economy is apparent when one realizes that certain responses to the external environment had far-reaching effects on the traditional relationship between employer and employee, and that the more the employers responded, the greater such impact would be. The traditional structures, such as guilds and contract labor gangs, had grown up in a preindustrial environment, and they had served certain useful and rational pur-

poses in that setting, but once the environment changed, these institutions no longer served the same functions. In fact, these institutions continued to exist largely owing to inertia and to the persistence of the authority of the traditional leadership. But at the same time, the discrepancy between the traditional expectations and the practice of the contemporary leadership, the discrepancy between past usefulness and contemporary uselessness, constituted a potential structural crisis that left these traditional institutions vulnerable to attack. The more they changed, the more vulnerable they became.

The contract labor system at the mines was a traditional institution that had functioned much like the agricultural bang. The latter, summoned up only during the busy seasons, was a rational, indispensable feature of the countryside. The contract labor system also operated under conditions where there was a fluctuating demand for labor or the labor was not permanent. The domestic demand for ore and minerals had been limited, and the mines had not operated steadily. The banding and disbanding of the labor force had been a common feature of operations. Under these conditions, the contractors served a useful function, and few of those served by them would have begrudged them their cut. And since contractors both recruited and managed labor, they obviously served a useful function in a period when many new and different enterprises were being introduced into China, especially for foreign managers and engineers — cultural outsiders whose ability to function in Chinese society at the level of the worker was limited.

However, when demand stabilized at a level that ensured steady operation, particularly in the case of a mine such as Anyuan that was producing for the Japanese market, there was no need to band and disband groups of miners. The core of the work force was becoming an essentially permanent body. The most useful function that the contractors had served was no longer there. And once they no longer served some necessary function, it was possible to create resentment against them, not only because of their harsh treatment of the workers, but because of the cut they took from the workers' wages. That the relatively more steady demand of an international market was behind the increasing obsolescence of the system is also suggested by the fact that at Shuikoushan, where the mining administration still had difficulty disposing of its products and which was in 1922 still selling off a surplus, the attack on

the contract labor system was not as explicit or vigorous. To the extent that the contract labor system had outlived its usefulness, it provided easily lit kindling to fuel the labor movement.

Yet another of the four strikes derived its energy from the dismantling of a preindustrial structure, the construction workers' guild. The internal solidarity of the guild had been weakened, in part, by an expanding economy, the stirring of the stagnant pool. Either the guilds were differentiating along an axis defined by craft guilds versus merchant guilds, or they were differentiating internally, as in the case of the construction workers, where the production function had become separated from the entrepreneurial function. The new guild leaders, like the contractors, were benefiting from an institution that no longer served the membership in the traditional way. The useful functions that the guild had served in the past for its members were no longer being fulfilled by a new capitalist leadership. The guild leadership, perceiving that their interests were no longer identical with those of the journeymen, had drawn the class line. They refused to use guild funds to pay for negotiations to end a wage freeze. The workers were not oblivious to these changes. They did perceive that their leadership was now "different." The "aged and respected" had been pushed aside, and "bad elements" had taken over the guilds (Burgess, 1928: 94).

It was precisely because of this recent differentiation that had produced two classes within one guild that the Hunanese Communists were able to organize a modern construction workers' union. It was differentiation that left the guild leadership vulnerable to attack, that made it possible for the Communists to convince the workers that their leaders had deserted them and betrayed them. It was the journeymen's feeling that they had been betrayed that made it possible for the Communists to convince the workers that they had to have a class-delineated modern union, their own autonomous voice, to do battle with these betrayers of the old ways.

But to have built a political program on a return to the past would have been folly. The changes were irreversible. Nor did the Communists want to turn the clock backward. Instead they built on the workers' hostility to capitalist change and particularly on their tradition of unity, of solidarity against the outside world. By defining the guild leaders as outsiders, a definition that the workers were willing to accept since the leadership no longer worked with trowel or saw and had failed to live up to the workers'

traditional expectations, the Communists were able to form a class-delineated proletarian union, an institution designed to do battle with capitalists. The Communists succeeded in harnessing the energy of this collision because they were Marxists, not liberal reformers, and their Marxist analysis appealed to the workers in large part not only because Marx's critique of capitalist society legitimized their own objections to these unwelcome changes, but also because in many ways Marxist utopian visions of a communal future reaffirmed some of the more appealing preindustrial ideals, ideals which these workers had never relinquished.

It is thus clear that the energy behind the Communist-led movement did not come simply from those small pockets of the most modern workers. Some of them had already gone through the transition of shedding their old institutions and organizing modern unions before the Communists had had any impact. Many of them had affiliations with older political organizations. The success of the labor movement in Hunan grew out of the organizers' ability to harness the energy of those workers just then feeling the contradiction between the old organizations and the new economic realities, particularly the changes in the relationship between employer and employee. The energy that propelled the movement through its initial stage came from the destruction of the old institutions, the release of the workers from the authority of the guild and the contractor, and the formation of new modern unions. If one wants to find a material basis for proletarian revolution in China, particularly for the pre-1925 labor movement, the answer lies in the economic changes wrought both by the direct and the indirect impact of industrial capitalism and the world market on the entire Chinese economy, not just on its most modern pockets.

It is not surprising that the explosive reaction of dismantling and reorganizing, of splitting and fusion, was sometimes even more dramatic in China than in Europe. China was distant from the homeland of industrial capitalism, and the confrontation between old and new was much more obvious. In Europe, especially England, the process was indigenous and more gradual, whereas in China its origins were clearly alien, and it appeared on the horizon rather suddenly, challenging China's elites as well as her traditions. And because the changes were so easily labeled as alien, it was quite natural that anticapitalist sentiment often became inseparable from patriotism or nationalism. Furthermore, at the point of impact, the traditional structures were still viable,

and the expectations that they had produced, even if those expectations were the result of an idealized past, were still strong in the minds of the people. Yet another factor was timing. These disruptive changes reached a critical point at roughly the same time as the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia succeeded. The stage had been set for a much more inflammatory collision than the one Marx had studied in Europe. As a result, an idealized socialist future would replace an idealized past in the minds of some of China's workers.

Within the context of the literature on the Chinese revolution, the suggestion that artisans or other traditional workers played a leading role in the Communist-led Hunan labor movement, and, perhaps, in the labor movements of other provinces as well, sounds quite strange. However, if one compares the Chinese movement with those in Europe, it fits a well-known pattern. For example, the situation in China in the first half of the twentieth century was not completely unlike that in Germany in the nineteenth century. When Marx published the Communist Manifesto in February 1848, Germany was not an industrial society either. It was simply "on the threshold of the Industrial Revolution. . . . Predominantly agricultural, with economics based on the peasant and the farm, the guild and the artisan, Germany was in many ways Medieval. . . ." (Noyes, 1966: 15). In the same way that China feared the West, Germany felt threatened by the growing industrial power of France and England. To some degree, Germany was a fragmented and impacted country, just as China was in the 1920s. And in Germany (and the rest of Europe too) it was the artisans, and not the most modern industrial workers, who were the major source of mass revolutionary unrest during this period.

. . . Threatened with extinction or submersion in the mass of the proletariat, the artisans revolted, sometimes in the name of traditional guilds, sometimes paradoxically in the name of that "working class" whose very formation they sought to avoid. Indeed the decline of the artisans, or rather their changed position, may well account for the decreasing danger of revolution in the latter part of the century (Noyes, 1966: 3).

It has been argued that Marx, too, was close to the preindustrial world, the "world we have lost," and that much of his idealized future is posited on the idealized past that industrial capitalism destroyed (Laslett, 1973: 18). In fact, one wonders if it was not the destruction of Germany's traditional institutions by the rise of

industrial capitalism, a revolutionary process that Marx had witnessed, that prompted him to predict yet another structural crisis for the future. One might even suggest that the conditions in Germany that produced a Marx were quite similar to conditions in China that produced a Marxist labor movement. And, one might even hypothesize, based on empirical studies of labor movements and revolutions that have taken place to date, that workers are more prone to revolution during the early stages of industrialization when the factory system is spreading, and the demands of the world market are beginning to have some impact, than they are once the process has reached a stage of maturity.

What is clear from an examination of the Hunan movement is that Marx's critique of industrial capitalism can capture the minds of the masses as well as young students at the point of the disintegration of traditional structures, especially when the agent of change is foreign and the past is so near and clearly not forgotten. Marxism is in this situation a compelling critique of the enemy, a vehicle for nostalgia for an idealized past, as well as an inspiration for a more modern future.

#### *FACTORS PERTAINING TO HUNAN IN PARTICULAR*

But Communist organizers were not uniformly successful throughout China. One factor that might explain why they succeeded in Hunan and not in some other places was the relative lack of political competition. In the early 1920s the Nationalist Party was quite weak in Hunan, and it never had had a strong mass allegiance in the province. When it did revive in Hunan during the mid-twenties, it remained completely dependent on the Communists for any kind of mass base (Hofheinz, 1966: 225).

Anarchism, on the other hand, was relatively important. It was anarchism that had inspired the strongest rivals of the CCP in Hunan. The anarchist-led Hunan Labor Association had recruited a few thousand workers, but owing to its antipathy toward organization, it had not been particularly effective in mobilizing its forces against any specific target; nor had it won many battles. In the one instance where the association had succeeded in winning the demands of the striking spinning mill workers, the warlord Zhao Hengti had destroyed their organization, executed two of their leaders, and banned their publications.



Zhao Hengti's destruction of the Hunan Labor Association was most fortunate for the Communists. It would appear that prior to the demise of the association the CCP did not have a strong labor organization of its own. The Communists seem to have trailed along behind the association, "gesticulating and criticizing" (Mao, 1965: 24). Once the association had been erased from the scene, the field was wide open for the Communists, and they were able to benefit from the contacts that they had made with members of the anarchist association, to pick up the pieces that they had left behind. Anarchist contacts were evident in all four of the strikes studied here.

The only rival which remained during the strike wave of 1922 was the Mechanics' Union. It does not seem to have been hostile to the Communists in the early days of the movement. In fact, its members invited Communists to come to Anyuan. The good will between the two, however, had disappeared by the autumn of 1923, when Bin Bucheng was sent to Shuikoushan in an attempt to break up the CCP-led union there. Nevertheless, because the Mechanics' Union was limited to skilled machinists, and thus limited in its ability to recruit from a labor force characterized largely by unskilled workers and traditional craftsmen, it was not a serious obstacle.

Again, timing seems to have been of the utmost importance, both with respect to the absence of rivals and with regard to the Communists' ability in Hunan to almost monopolize the issue of class-delineated unions. The most instructive comparison is with the Guangzhou area, also a traditional handicrafts center, but the first area in China to feel the direct impact of the West. Guangzhou was also the first to produce a modern labor movement, a movement that predated the founding of the Chinese Communist Party. Labor leaders there tended to be anarchists, and they often were associated with the Nationalist Party, whose roots in that area dated back to 1895. In 1922 the Nationalist Party still was quite strong in the Guangzhou area. Furthermore, class-delineated unions in the Guangzhou area preceded any significant Communist presence in the labor movement. This was not true in Hunan. Aside from the mechanics and printers, Hunanese labor still was entangled in pre-modern guilds and bangs in 1922, and both were ripe for destruction. The Communists in Hunan thus would be able to lead this process of class-delineated unionization and build their movement on it. Once again, Hunan's geographical position, away from the

coast, and its elite's determined resistance to Western penetration had delayed developments sufficiently to save them for a time when the CCP was forming and embarking on a new stage of the revolution, and this delay made it possible for the Communist Party and Marxism to harness the energy released by the process.

*VARIOUS RESPONSES OF LABOR  
ORGANIZERS TO STAGE THEORY*

An examination of this movement does not simply begin to answer the question of why the movement enjoyed so much initial success, it also raises other questions, in particular, why did such a successful movement lose so dramatically in 1927 and what was the impact of both rapid success and subsequent difficulty on the young Communists who led the early phase of the movement. A proper answer to these questions would require a close examination of later events, which this study does not offer, but it is possible to suggest some answers, based largely on this material.

In this unorthodox environment, Communist organizers in Hunan often had to deal creatively with situations that no classical Marxist would have anticipated. They not only had to face the question of how to pursue a labor movement in a country with a relatively small modern proletariat, they also were presented with a particularly complicated problem of how to pursue a labor movement in what was defined as a nationalist revolutionary stage. At the second Comintern Congress in 1920, the participants promoted a theory of revolutionary stages that attempted to define the tasks and the strategies of Communist Parties in preindustrial countries. Although many aspects were left ambiguous, there was a general notion with regard to China that the national bourgeois revolution, the unification and modernization of the country, had to precede the socialist revolution and should command the primary attention of the Communist Party. This perspective was incorporated into Chinese Communist policy statements in the summer of 1922, just prior to the strike wave analyzed here. According to the Party center, a coalition of four classes, the workers, the peasants, the petty bourgeoisie, and the national bourgeoisie, was supposed to coalesce and work together to destroy the warlords and oppose imperialism. The Party center also made clear that this new policy of uniting with the national bourgeoisie, among others, to pursue the goals of nationalist revolution was not supposed to inter-

fere with the independent pursuit of the Communist labor movement. The effort to unionize and politicize China's workers was to proceed as before. What they did not make clear was how one could pursue proletarian aims at the same time that one was cooperating with the national bourgeoisie.

In five out of the six industrial centers defined by Chesneaux, the organizers at least had the option of confining their proletarian efforts to the employees of foreigners or Chinese businessmen associated with foreigners (the comprador bourgeoisie), since demands and strikes against them would not damage the interests of the national bourgeoisie, and might help them. But what were the organizers to do in Hunan, where there were no foreign employers? Any union formed would have to be formed at a Chinese-owned enterprise. Hunanese organizers could not escape the question of how to assist both the workers and their employers when classical Marxist theory posited irreconcilable contradictions between them. Of the many names of Party organizers that appear in the history of the Hunan movement, only three seem to have survived the civil war between the Nationalist Party and CCP from 1927 to 1936, Li Lisan, Liu Shaoqi, and Mao Zedong, and each of them appears to have answered the question of how to pursue a labor movement during the nationalist stage of a revolution in a somewhat different way, and each of them could have gone away thinking that his had been the right answer.

Although it is somewhat hazardous to try to distinguish the attitudes of the three some fifty years after the event, it is not impossible. Even though they all belonged to the same organization and were bound, in theory, by the same policies, there are significant differences. And even though Mao was the head of first the Labor Secretariat and then the Hunan Federation of Labor Organizations, and in a position to exercise some central direction, and did have his relatives strategically placed — Mao Zemin at Anyuan, Mao Zetan at Shuikoushan, and Yang Kaihui and Mao Zehong with the Yuebei Workers and Peasants' Unions — local variations do stand out. And there were a number of curious reversals of policy at Anyuan and Shuikoushan that suggest that direction from the center was significant, but sometimes slow in arriving. But the most important aid in distinguishing the attitudes of the three is simply that they were not in the same place at the same time. Mao lived in Changsha and was directly involved in the printers and construction workers' strikes. His leadership of the strikes at Anyuan and

Shuikoushan, on the other hand, must have been long-distance, at best. Aside from those times when he made occasional visits, his impact on these unions was indirect. Li Lisan was the senior organizer at Anyuan from January 1922. And Liu Shaoqi did not arrive at Anyuan until September and did not take over the union until 1923. By analyzing the policies and attitudes by place and time, by studying the extant writings, and by accumulating the available accounts that make reference to their differences, it is possible to separate out their various orientations. Although some of these accounts concerning their differences are highly politicized products of the Cultural Revolution, not all of them are, and what is comforting to the historian is that matters of fact do not differ significantly from one set of material to the other. For the most part, it is only the attitude toward these facts that differs.

#### *THE RESPONSE OF LI LISAN*

Li Lisan's solution to the dilemma of how to pursue a labor movement in the nationalist stage of the revolution seems to have been to ignore the problem. He did not make any concessions to China's backwardness. Li, who had left China in 1919 and gone to France, was the only one of the three who had seen a Western industrial colonial power's homeland, and he was the only one who had had personal experience with the Western proletariat and its politics and organizations. Indeed, he joined the Chinese Communist Party in France. That China was a preindustrial country does not seem to have had much impact on Li's thinking; he seems never to have realized that this fact would have strategic consequences in the revolution. He seems to have resented the intrusion of the Comintern's theory of national revolution first and socialist revolution later. In 1926 he wrote a letter to a Shanghai union (which somehow ended up in an English-language newspaper) suggesting that Russian direction in the movement was no longer required. The unions had reached a level of maturity that made it unnecessary to have outside (Comintern) help (North China Herald: April 10, 1926).

Later, from 1928 to 1930, he insisted on throwing the Communist armies against cities, in spite of the consequences, in a desperate attempt to regain a proletarian base for the Party. He does not seem to have appreciated the rural strategies of Mao. Nor did he

appreciate the advice or the policies that came from the Comintern headquarters in Russia. He simply lost the directives that did not appeal to him. Li Lisan seems to have been disposed generally to just ignore those things that were inconvenient, including the lack of a large industrial proletariat in China.

Li's strength seems to have been in agitation and inspirational work. He was the first CCP organizer to live in Anyuan, and he was principally responsible for the prestrike mobilization. Evidently the workers liked him, even if other intellectuals thought him a bit uncouth. His forte does seem to have been that of an energetic agitator, and not too long after the strike was won and the union turned to internal discipline and increasing production, he left for Shanghai. He could rightly have felt that he had made a significant contribution to the union's success, and that he had left the less exciting part to Liu Shaoqi. He continued to witness urban success, including the March 1927 workers' takeover of Shanghai. Thus it is not surprising that he was determined after 1927 to regain an urban base, the locale of previous proletarian glories. He no doubt believed that it was possible to revive that movement. However, in 1930 Li was shipped off to Moscow to study his errors; he eventually ended up in one of Stalin's prisons, and did not return to China until the Party was on the eve of regaining those urban bases, some twenty years later. After 1949 he was once more on the Central Committee, and most of his assignments were with urban workers. In the sense that he never gave up on the workers as the key to the revolution, he was the most orthodox Marxist.

#### *THE RESPONSE OF LIU SHAOQI*

Liu Shaoqi, who had arrived in Anyuan only days before the strike was called, had not been in the Hunan area for several years. He had gone to Shanghai in 1918, and in 1920 he enrolled in a Russian-sponsored language school. In 1921 he went to Moscow to study, and indeed he joined the Party in Moscow. Unlike the exuberant Li, Liu did dwell on China's backwardness, and he did recognize the necessity for the nationalist or democratic stage of the revolution. Liu had been to Russia when the revolution was new and Lenin was still alive, but he had also witnessed the extreme hardships that the Russians endured immediately after the civil war and Western intervention. He came home with Party

discipline and increased production on his mind.

Liu Shaoqi took seriously the idea that the Chinese bourgeoisie was oppressed by international capitalism and that China's capitalists and her workers shared an interest in strengthening the nation against the imperialists. It was of the utmost importance to modernize China, to modernize the workers as well as the factories. The labor movement was perceived as an opportunity to improve the quality of labor, to improve the miners' work habits as well as their general education and skills. He was also concerned about the maintenance of tools and machines. In his mind, the workers and the management should have shared a number of concerns, and he hoped that the management would respond to the workers' initiative themselves and become more concerned about efficiency and competency.

He tended to measure revolutionary fervor by one's willingness to sacrifice and endure hardships, almost to the point of equating hardship and suffering with revolution. He certainly did not idealize the workers; rather he saw them as adventurist, as too quick to take matters into their own hands, unconcerned about Party or work discipline, and still consumed by petty regional quarrels. Liu does not seem to have had much rapport with the workers, although some obviously respected him for his dedication. Nor does he seem to have been a mobilizer and agitator the way that Li was. It also appears that Liu had difficulty stepping into Li's shoes and changing the emphasis of the union. Some workers seem to have formed anti-Liu factions.

Liu stayed on at Anyuan until 1925, for "Little Moscow" remained unscathed throughout the two years of national retreat after the February Seventh Incident of 1923. Indeed, he may have left Anyuan feeling that this two-and-one-half-year reprieve was due in part to his careful and cautious direction, his attempt to direct the union's energy into constructive channels.

Liu, like Li, remained with the urban movement when he left Anyuan. He also remained in the urban areas after 1927. Instead of retreating to the rural areas, he stayed in the cities, underground, in a situation where his strengths of discipline and organization were useful and his shortcomings in mobilization and mass work were in large part irrelevant. He did not leave the White Areas and arrive in Yanan until 1937. The author of the long reports about what the union's membership had done wrong was in the 1930s still writing about how to be a good Communist. And

possibly it was, at least in part, Liu Shaoqi's emphasis on Party discipline and his distrust of mass politics that got him into trouble in the Cultural Revolution, that led to the leader of "Little Moscow" being singled out as China's Khrushchev.

#### *THE RESPONSE OF MAO ZEDONG*

Mao's response to this dilemma of pursuing a labor movement during the national bourgeois stage of the revolution is the most complicated and the most easily misunderstood. It is quite clear, however, that he was no country bumpkin whose departure from the labor movement and subsequent revolutionary move to the countryside was foreordained by his rural origins. When he arrived in Changsha in 1911 he was seventeen years old; he was twenty-nine when he left for Shanghai in 1923. He did not make a decisive move toward peasant organizing until 1925 — some fourteen years after he had left his village, years that were most crucial in terms of his education and his political experience. He left the labor movement only when he was forced to leave Hunan by the warlord Zhao Hengti, and like Li and Liu, he left behind him a record of success with workers. Furthermore he left in April 1923, after the February Seventh Incident, but before the movement in Hunan had suffered any serious setbacks. Why then when he arrived in Shanghai, the largest concentration of urban workers inside the Great Wall, did he not get involved with the labor movement? And why did he later move on to peasant organizing? The answers may lie in his experiences with Hunan's unions, his unique definition of the national revolution, and his analysis of the labor movement in a nationalist revolution.

Before plunging into the larger and more significant reason for the change of focus that Mao's energies underwent, it might be worthwhile to at least consider the practical difficulties that he would have faced had he tried to organize Shanghai workers. First and foremost there would have been a dialect problem. Mao, as a Hunanese, spoke heavily accented Mandarin, and there is no indication that he could speak the local Shanghai dialect. This inability to converse easily with the local population, including the workers among them, might have been the reason that Mao, apparently, did not become involved with Shanghai unions. Yet another factor that might have discouraged him was that many of the tactics that he had developed in Hunan would not have worked for

him in Shanghai. He had relied in part on certain provisions of the Hunan provincial constitution, his contacts with local students and intellectuals, and his intimate knowledge of local politics, all of which he would have lacked in Shanghai, a city dominated by the foreign community. That he was in many real senses a stranger in Shanghai and unable to converse easily with the majority of its population would have made it quite difficult for him to pursue a labor movement in the same way that he had in his home province.

On the other hand, some Hunanese labor organizers did work successfully in Shanghai. At least two of them became union officials in that city, and there were several thousand Hunanese workers in Shanghai (many of whom were women) and even more workers from Hupei, with whom Hunanese could converse easily (Chesneaux, 1968: 67-69). There might have been a limited role there for Mao among the workers had he been determined to pursue that course. Nevertheless, he did not choose to stay in the labor movement, and the reason why he did not seems to be related to something more than these practical considerations.

Some people might suggest that it was Mao's dedication to nationalist or liberal causes that prompted him to leave the labor movement. An examination of Mao's years as an organizer of unions does indicate that his involvement with liberal reformers and liberal causes such as the Hunan provincial constitution was greater than that of either Li Lisan or Liu Shaoqi. This, however, was simply fortuitous. Mao had not gone abroad, and thus he had been in Hunan throughout a series of liberal and nationalist political movements and thus had political roots in the province deeper than those of Li and Liu. Even before he was a Marxist Mao had been playing power politics in Hunan, while Liu was in Shanghai and Moscow and Li was in France, and thus he was more familiar with these liberal personages. Second, during the movement itself he was in the provincial capital. Ironically, Li and Liu were off in the countryside, in mining camps located relatively far from major urban centers. Mao was simply in a better position to use the reformist elite, to see how much they might help, and also to see the limits of their enthusiasm for the workers' demands.

But a close look at how Mao used the reformist elite demonstrates clearly that he was merely using them, that he was not truly supporting them and certainly was not inspired by them. He severed the workers from the traditional elite and showed them how to use their old enemies, the reformers, and their constitution.



His use of the free enterprise slogan is most revealing. It was ideal for attracting the attention of the liberal elite that wanted to enforce the provisions of the constitution and that resented the manner in which Zhao Hengti had enacted the constitution and doubted that he truly intended to implement it. On the other hand, Mao, in the end, defined free enterprise to mean the right to strike. And in organizing the union, he was challenging the right of the guild leaders, now properly evolved into a petty bourgeoisie, to lead the workers, and claiming that right for the Communist Party. He showed no sympathy for the idea of helping the national bourgeoisie and thus strengthening China. He showed no concern for the legitimate or illegitimate interests of the newly budded capitalists of the construction industry. At least in the case of the construction industry, Mao was attacking a newly evolved bourgeoisie with a history of antireformist sentiments, but the strike the lead-type printers called against their industry was an attack on the most articulate sector of the liberal reformist elite. Mao was undaunted by their pleas that the wage levels demanded were too high, and he expressed no dismay when several printing houses were forced to close down as a result of the strike. Nor did he show any hesitancy about striking out against Dagong bao, which had printed favorable coverage of the labor movement until it too was struck against. The printers' strike was a direct attack on the most significant and likely allies that the CCP had in the proposed nationalist coalition.

The exchange that occurred between the editor of Dagong bao, an old associate of Mao's from the days of the struggle for the constitution, and Mao after the printers' strike also reveals that Mao, unlike Liu, was unwilling to make public criticisms of the workers. Nor would he give credence to the description of the workers' shortcomings mentioned by the editor. He was openly sarcastic about the potential for education and recreation to really do anything for the workers. Mao could easily have used bourgeois criticisms about the guilds, such as Liu used against the contractors, but he did not. Mao appears to have been oblivious to raising productivity or increasing the skill levels of the workers. Although there is a strong sense of the importance of organization and a desire for the unchallenged leadership of the workers, there is no record to indicate that Mao spent hours drafting reports about workers failing to abide by rules, being too arrogant, too prone to violence, or exhibiting sloppy work habits. Nor does Mao seem to

have feared the mob. He called for petition campaigns and massed Changsha's workers at the district magistrate's gate. At Anyuan, where Liu led, the workers were instructed to stay in their dormitories when the strike was called.

It is possible that at least some of these differences might have resulted from the settings of the unions, with Mao in the civilized urban center and Liu in the hinterland. Ironically, once again, it is significant that it was Liu Shaoqi who was out in the mountains in a wild and wooly mining camp, and Mao Zedong who operated at the provincial urban centers, surrounded by urban reformers and skilled craftsmen. It is quite possible that printers and construction workers had more pride in their work and a more professional attitude than the miners, so that campaigns to increase productivity were not necessary.

On the other hand, one could have defended the miners' working habits in the same manner that Mao defended the printers' lack of interest in education and recreation. He suggested that the printers' jobs were so arduous that if they then went out to do calisthenics, it might kill them. One could have suggested, in the same vein, that miners who tried to work hard under their conditions might have worked themselves to death. That they sought to obliterate their problems in opium dens or to escape them through gambling, or that, too poor to marry, they patronized brothels, does not indicate that their own somewhat disreputable solutions to their problems were any less realistic than the union-sponsored efficiency and morality campaigns. But in Liu Shaoqi's report from Anyuan and Ming Fei's report from Shuikoushan few allowances were made for the workers.

Nor did the miners have a monopoly on fighting among themselves or lawless acts. The lead-type printers and lithographers got into a brawl that marked the split of their union into its separate parts. The construction workers, who had led the mobs of the Changsha riots in 1911, broke into guild leaders' homes at supper-time to remark on the relative merits of their diets, and on one occasion they chased the guild negotiators into the inner sanctum of the guild hall. During the petition march one worker seized a rifle from a guard. All of these incidents were recorded without negative comment. Crowds and commotion do not seem to have bothered Mao any more in 1922 than they did in 1966. He certainly did not dwell on the workers' sins, as Liu Shaoqi did. Mao thus seems to have been quite skeptical about the effectiveness of bour-

geois reforms, and he replied to criticisms of the workers and the leaders with sarcasm. He did not take them seriously; nor did he entertain any hopes about cooperating with the owners to increase efficiency.

It would seem that Mao's experience with the labor movement disillusioned him not with the workers but with the national bourgeoisie. A kind of contempt seems to have set in as he measured their power and their will against their goals and their Marxist-defined historical tasks of creating a strong central government, a bourgeois democracy, and an industrial economy. In the summer of 1923, just a few months after leaving the Hunanese labor movement, Mao seems to have doubted that the bourgeoisie was even going to participate in the bourgeois revolution. In July of that year he wrote an appeal directed at the bourgeoisie, trying to point out to them that this was supposed to be their revolution, and that they should help fight it. It is clear that he was not impressed with their participation up to that point.

The merchants have hitherto "loved peace" and have never imagined that political transformation necessitated a revolution which could not be accomplished by a few telegrams in favour of "the reduction of the number of soldiers, the application of the constitution, and financial reforms." Still less did they imagine that revolution necessitated their personal participation, and that only by calling for the organization of all the people and creating a mass movement could a revolutionary force be brought into existence. . . . It is impossible to compare these juvenile and timid attitudes with the present situation without being convulsed with laughter (Schram, 1969: 207-208).

Such contempt was possible because in China the bourgeoisie, like the proletariat, was not the dominant class. Many of its members were weak economically. Not only were they weak compared to the imperialists, the landlords, and the warlords, but they had collapsed in the face of the workers' strikes. They didn't even make good enemies, especially when they truly were unable to pay higher wages and closed down their businesses. And the workers certainly could not seize power from a class that did not have it. On the other hand, when one looked to see what group truly threatened the development of the workers' movement and the lives of its organizers, it was the warlords, who certainly did have power. The question that absorbed Mao in 1923 was how to destroy the warlords. Mao in 1923 did not dedicate himself to the bourgeoisie but to the goals of an idealized bourgeois revolution, as he makes

quite explicit in the following passage from the same 1923 article in which he called the bourgeoisie "timid and juvenile."

The present political problem in China is none other than the problem of the national revolution. To use the strength of the people to overthrow the militarists and foreign imperialism . . . is the historic mission of the Chinese people. This revolution is the task of the people as a whole. The merchants, workers, peasants, students, and teachers should all come forward to take on the responsibility for a portion of the revolutionary work; but because of historical necessity and current tendencies, the work for which the merchants should be responsible in the national revolution is both more urgent and more important than the work that the rest of the people should take upon themselves (Schram, 1969: 206-207; emphasis added).

Mao did not say that the merchants should lead the nationalist revolution, as Stuart Schram has claimed in his biography of Mao (Schram 1966: 73-74), but that the work for which the merchants should be responsible — that is, the implementation of bourgeois goals — was most urgent (Schram, 1969: 206-207). And this work, according to Marx (the euphemism here is "historical necessity") is supposed to be the work of the bourgeoisie. At this stage ("current tendencies") the bourgeois goals of national unification and independence (defeat of the warlords and imperialists) are "more urgent and more important." (That is, the contradiction between the warlords and imperialists, on the one hand, and the people, on the other, was the primary contradiction.)

Mao's decision to work for the Nationalist Party-CCP alliance in 1924 heretofore has been explained as a response to his anti-imperialist, or nationalist, sentiments. They no doubt did push him in that direction, but one should not overlook as a motivating factor the importance of his antiwarlord sentiments and Mao's recent experience with warlords in the labor movement. The immediate goal of the alliance was the defeat of the warlords and the unification of China, and indeed the 1926-27 Northern Expedition which grew out of that coalition went further toward achieving that goal than it did toward ending imperialism.

What was on Mao's mind is clear from an August 1923 article entitled, "The Provincial Constitution and Zhao Hengti." In that piece Mao lists the sins of Zhao. He had executed the anarchist labor leaders Huang and Pang. He had shut down newspapers. He had opened people's mail and read their telegrams. He had violated the people's rights to form organizations and assemble, es-

pecially with regard to students and workers. He condoned his soldiers' opium business. He had tried to buy elections. He had harrassed the local merchants. He had extracted extortionate taxes from the peasants. (In some xian he had forced the peasants to pay their taxes through 1929). He had reduced the funds available for education and increased military appropriations. And he had gotten the province involved in unnecessary wars. It would seem that Mao's hostility toward the warlord Zhao matched his hostility toward imperialism (Mao, 1972: 92).

As a labor organizer, Mao could not help but develop this hostility toward the warlords, in general, and Zhao Hengti, in particular, for the true villain of the Hunan labor movement was not the bourgeoisie, the Chinese employers who had lost to the unions, but the warlord Zhao. Many times the Chinese bourgeoisie had collapsed in the face of proletarian attack, but the warlords did not collapse. And it was a warlord who had run Mao and other organizers out of the province. It was a warlord that crushed the northern railroad unions. By 1923 it was clear that the major obstacle to proletarian revolution was not the bourgeoisie but the warlords. Once they had realized the threat that the unions represented to their own strategic and tactical, political and military interests, the warlords relentlessly resorted to arms to crush them.

Anyone intent on defeating the warlords could have seen that they had many potential enemies. Mao had previously tried to mobilize the enemies of Zhao, the supporters of the constitution and reforms, as allies in the labor movement. It was quite natural that he would accept the idea of a nationalist alliance including workers, students, merchants, peasants, and teachers to defeat the warlords, hoping that their defeat would open up new possibilities for the labor movement. It was in this frame of mind that, at the Third Party Congress in the summer of 1923, he argued that the Communists should organize peasants, simply because there were so many of them. "... In Hunan there were few workers and even fewer Nationalist Party and CCP members, whereas the peasants there filled the mountains and fields" (Chang Kuo-t'ao, 1971: 309). In 1923, for Mao, peasants were just one more constituency that might be mobilized against the warlords. He was not so interested in them or their problems in that year to go himself to organize them. He was still content to work at the center, recruiting and organizing for the antiwarlord alliance. Thus, while it is quite true that the defeat of the warlords and the unification

of the country were goals not of the socialist revolution, but of the bourgeois democratic or nationalist revolution, one should not mistake Mao's enthusiasm for a bourgeois goal as enthusiasm for the bourgeoisie.

Mao's career in Shanghai with the Party center lasted little more than one year. By the winter of 1924-25, he had left his post and returned to Hunan. He told Edgar Snow that he was ill and had gone home to recuperate. But it was during his recuperation that he discovered the key to the warlords' defeat, once again, for the first time in about fourteen years, immersed in the villages. Many Chinese at that time, whether or not they were Marxists, believed that although industrial societies were marked by classes and by class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, preindustrial or rural societies were, somehow, classless. The peasantry was seen generally as an undifferentiated mass. Apparently Mao, too, had thought that way. However, after two and a half years as an organizer of urban labor, as an observer of class and class conflict in the somewhat less than orthodox milieu of Changsha where he and the other organizers had had to apply political theory to some rather complex and unorthodox realities, Mao, in 1925, saw the Chinese countryside with new eyes. When he witnessed the disturbances in the rural areas that followed in the wake of the May 30th Movement, the realization of classes and class antagonism within village society could not escape him. In 1937, with regard to this transition of 1925, he told Edgar Snow, "Formerly, I had not fully realized the degree of class struggle among the peasantry" (Snow, 1968: 159), but after observing the peasants in action, he could not fail to see the class contradictions between landlords and tenants. The relationship between the tenant and the landlord or warlord in China was clearly analogous to that between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie in an industrial society. If the proletariat was indispensable to the bourgeoisie and thus capable of defeating the bourgeoisie, the tenant was indispensable to the landlord, and thus capable of defeating the landlord. It was only when Mao saw the significance of this class antagonism in the countryside in 1925 that he set out to organize the peasants.

This fortuitous transfer of a past organizer of urban labor to a countryside that was about to break out in revolt turned out to be exceedingly significant to the Chinese revolution. Mao had realized that even though warlords lived in cities and established

their headquarters in urban areas, their real power base was rural (Li Rui, 1957: 238). The landlords were their allies; indeed, warlords themselves usually were landlords. Their soldiers were displaced peasants. Their revenue came in large part from agricultural taxes and opium-generated funds. If the national revolution had to come first, if the warlords had to be defeated before a proletarian revolution could succeed, the class struggle between the peasant and the landlord became the key to the national or bourgeois stage of the revolution.

In a September 1926 article, "The National Revolution and the Peasantry," Mao outlined the ideological and strategic reasons for concentrating revolutionary efforts on the peasants. In an economically backward, semicolonial country, the greatest obstacle to revolution was not the bourgeoisie but the feudal landlord class and its leaders, the warlords. If one was serious about defeating the warlords, it was absolutely necessary to destroy the localized landlord power structure that supported them. Urban workers simply were not in a position to do this. Had the bourgeoisie been in power, the workers would have been in the strategic revolutionary position, but since the bourgeoisie was not in power, the workers were not in any such position, no matter how well organized or militant they might be. Unlike the peasants, they had little or no leverage with regard to the real power holders in China. They were still to be the leaders of all revolutionary classes, but they had to have peasant allies in order to destroy the fundamental power base of the country's rulers. In China, rural revolution was a prerequisite for urban success (Mao, 1972: 175-179).

Again, in early 1927, as the peasant uprising in Hunan reached its peak, Mao was quite explicit about what the national revolution required: the overthrow of the rural power structure by the peasants:

The fact is that the great peasant masses have risen to fulfill their historic mission and that the forces of rural democracy have risen to overthrow the forces of rural feudalism. . . . To overthrow these feudal forces is the real objective of the national revolution. In a few months the peasants have accomplished what Dr. Sun Yatsen wanted, but failed to accomplish in the forty years he devoted to the national revolution. . . . Every revolutionary comrade should know that the national revolution requires a great change in the countryside. The Revolution of 1911 did not bring about this change, hence its failure. This change is now taking place, and it is an important factor for the completion of the revolution (Mao, 1965: 27; emphasis added).

The most fundamental feature of what Mao described as the national bourgeois revolution from 1925 on was class warfare, the destruction of landlord power by peasants. This was a rather unusual definition of national revolution in China in the 1920s for it did not necessarily imply a coalition of classes united against imperialists and warlords, but a domestic transfer of power in the rural areas. Nor does Mao's definition imply an important role for the national bourgeoisie in the national or bourgeois democratic revolution.

After 1927 it was land reform that propelled the Communist movement. By seizing the land of the landlord and distributing this capital to the peasants, the new owner-operators, the Party would destroy local landlord, or feudal, power. In 1922 Mao had used the capitalist slogan of free enterprise, bourgeois rhetoric, and a bourgeois constitution to promote the labor movement, and after 1927 he used a capitalist form, the owner-operator system, under the slogan of rural democracy, to destroy landlord power. And by destroying the localized power of the landlords, the Communists were able to recreate a strong central government in China, something that the Nationalists had not been able to do. In fact, Mao did not declare the nationalist stage of the revolution to be over until 1955, when, in Socialist Upsurge in China's Countryside, he announced the completion of land reform, agricultural collectivization, and the collectivization of the factories and businesses as well. Thereafter ensued the contest between Mao and Liu that eventually culminated in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, which can be seen as a return by Mao to his original concern, proletarian goals, the goals of a socialist revolution.

Thus one should not misunderstand Mao's enthusiasm for the national revolution in 1923 as evidence that the impact that Marxism had had on his intellectual or political development was superficial. On the contrary, his determination to destroy warlords and landlords had grown out of his experiences as a labor leader, and his recognition of the class struggle in the village and its implications was, no doubt, linked to his experience as a labor leader. He was convinced that warlord power, which he linked intimately with landlord power, stood in the way of the Chinese labor movement, and indeed the Chinese revolution. And he was also convinced that the only force that could break that power was the peasantry. During the years that he was a labor leader, he had shown no sympathy for the plight of the national bourgeoisie, and they did not play any



fundamental role in his vision of the national revolution. He left the urban labor movement and became involved in peasant revolution not because the workers were not revolutionary or because they could not be organized by the Communists, but because no matter how loyal they were to their class, or how well organized they might be, given the power configurations in China, they could not make the revolution alone. They needed allies, and the allies he chose were not the national bourgeoisie, the target of the Hunanese labor movement, but the peasants.

Simply to observe the disaster that befell the Hunanese labor movement in 1927 and then conclude that it failed because its organizations must have been flimsy and it was too dependent on liberal or nationalist alliances is to ignore the early successes of this movement when the liberals in Hunan were out of power and to ignore the structural conditions in the province that created the movement. Furthermore, the unions came under attack in 1927 not because they were poorly organized and easily led by others, but because they were potentially dangerous to the newly established Nationalist government and the new allies which it had gathered during the course of the Northern Expedition. Among other things, the workers had taken over the city of Shanghai. The problem of the Chinese labor movement in 1927 was not that the unions, internally, were weak, but that given the structure of Chinese political and economic power at that time, not only were they not in a position to seize power nationally, which Mao had pointed out in 1926, they also were not in any position to defend themselves successfully from a concerted military attack from a stronger and relatively more centralized government. The same strategic concentration of the workers that Chesneaux observed and used to explain their early significance can also be used to explain their extreme vulnerability in a highly polarized environment. Even if the liberal factions at the local or national levels had not deserted the labor movement in 1927 and sought to reconcile themselves with Chiang Kai-shek, there would have been very little that they could have done to have stopped the destruction of the mass movements, both urban and rural, in that year. They were not powerful. The goals of the national revolution, as defined by Mao, would have to be reached before the workers would play a visible role in Chinese revolutionary politics again.

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## FREQUENTLY USED ABBREVIATIONS

<u>CEB</u>	<u>Chinese Economic Bulletin</u>
<u>CEJ</u>	<u>Chinese Economic Journal</u>
<u>CEM</u>	<u>Chinese Economic Monthly</u>
<u>JBN</u>	Hunan sheng zhi bianzuan weiyuan hui, eds. <u>Hunan jinbainian dashi jishu.</u>
HC	J. Calvin Huston Collection
<u>HQPP</u>	<u>Hongqi piaopiao</u>
<u>HNLSZL</u>	<u>Hunan lishi ziliao</u>
<u>HHXL</u>	Hunan sheng zhexue shehuixue xuehui lianhehui ji Hubei sheng zhexue shehuixue xuehui lianhehui, eds. <u>Wang Chuanshan xueshu taolunji.</u>
<u>SCMM</u>	<u>Survey of Chinese Mainland Magazines</u>
<u>YMCA HL</u>	Young Men's Christian Association Historical Library

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